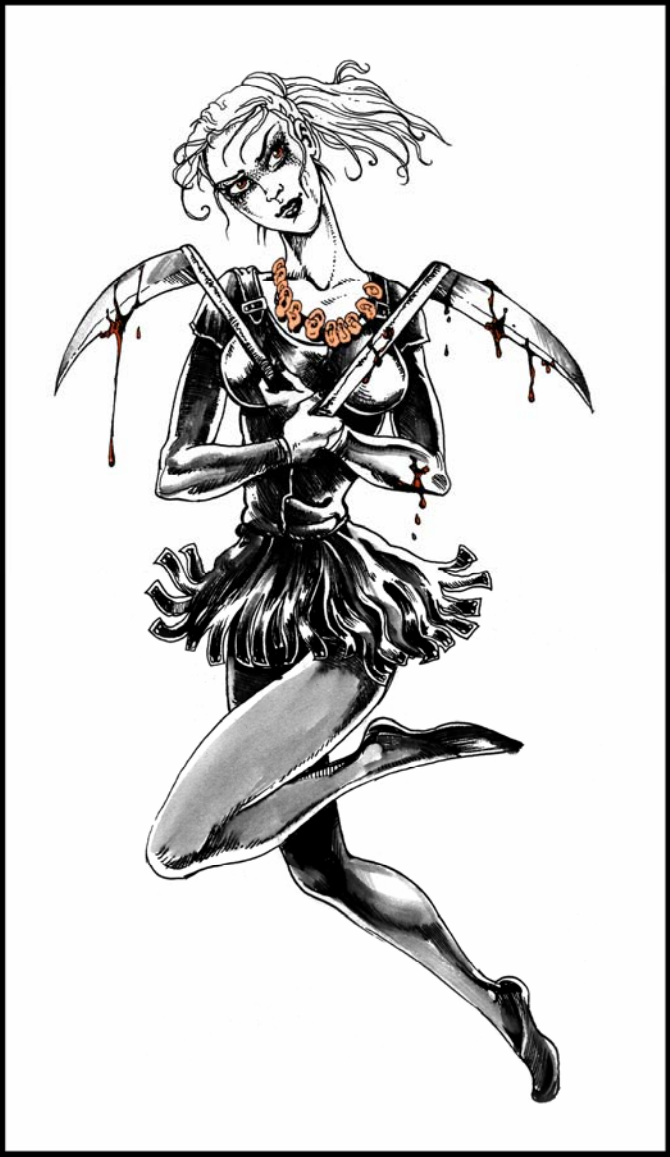
# STRANGE MAGIC



M&M SUPERLINK

by Roy M. Mikesell

plain brown wrapper games

# STRANGE MAGIC

By
Roy M. Mikesell

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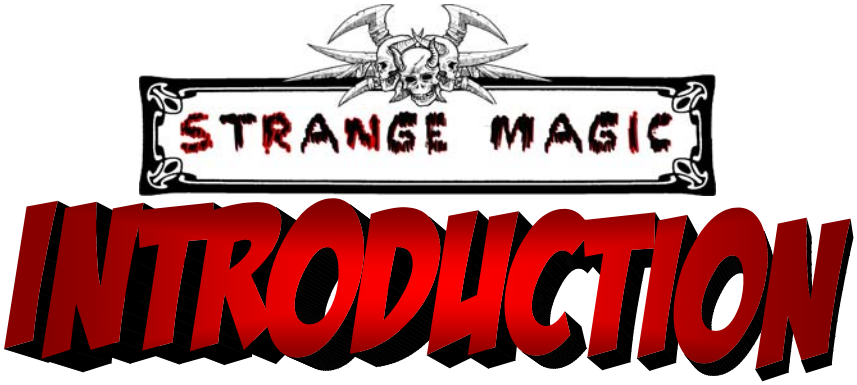



**What You Will Need to Use This Book**
Strange Magic is not a stand-alone RPG. It's a 2nd Edition M&M Superlink scenario. That means you'll need a copy of the core M&M rulebook to play it. You won't need anything else apart from some twenty-sided dice, some friends and some paper (although some pizza might also be a wise investment, as would some drinks). You aren't going to have to buy any other supplements or campaign settings to make use of this book—we wouldn't rip you off that way. This is just the basic M&M ruleset, with no extras or add-ons. Go spend the money we've saved on some more snacks for your players. They look hungry.

**New Powers, Feats and Skills**
We don't have any. Just as we don't want you to have to buy anything but the core rules to use this book, we don't want you to have to buy this one in order to make use of something else we publish down the line. Nor do we want to clutter up your game with a bunch of extra rules—one more thing for the "rules lawyers" in your gaming group to try and mess you about with. Furthermore, while everyone knows that the annoying problem of "rules creep" is all but inevitable with a game as popular as the M&M system, we don't want to contribute to it ourselves. So, you won't find any new rules of any kind in this volume.

**The Campaign Setting**
We'd like to think of this adventure as being set in your own campaign world instead of ours. In order to make it as easy as possible to incorporate into your campaign, we've tried our best to keep the locations as generic as possible. We name a number of locations—a city park, a jewelry store, a museum, to name a few, but we leave the actual locations intentionally vague so that you can migrate them over to your own setting. This could be Pittsburgh or Hong Kong or the futuristic wonder-city of Ultropolis.

**Which Age is This?**
Grim in some respects, campy in others, Strange Magic doesn't easily fit into categories like "Silver Age," "Iron Age" etc. It has a lot of elements of supernatural horror and the potential for a lot of (largely offscreen) civilian casualties, but its tone is lighthearted and its protagonists are never in any real moral doubt. Oddly, this makes it closest to the innocently vicious stories of the pre-comics-code Golden Age in tone, even though the setting is the present day. Not that there's any reason why this adventure couldn't be set in the 1930s. There is very little to tie it to any particular epoch—neither cell phones nor the internet nor any of the other trappings of the 21st Century appear in the plot.

**Recommended PL**
Strange Magic was designed for a "typical" party of superheroic adventurers. It works best with a group of 4-5 PL 10 PCs. We also have an appendix (Appendix B, which starts on Page 128) full of backup characters that you can use to beef up the ranks of the opposition or to replace NPCs who get killed, incapacitated or captured by the PCs.

**A Few Words About Tone**
While this is a supernatural adventure, with terrible, bloodthirsty villains and a heavy dose of horror, it's actually pretty lighthearted. The PCs will face no agonizing moral decisions or tortured ambiguities here. It is, instead, a simple tale about good guys beating up bad guys and foiling their sinister schemes. We've just dressed it up in horror comics clothes. The villains

may be disturbing, but the plot isn't. Our aim here was to make it useful to the broadest possible range of GMs and players.

It's easy to make it darker without changing the story. We've included a lot of scenes with large numbers of innocent bystanders, so just let the villains start piling on the collateral damage, mowing down civilians like wheat in a field. Then make sure that the relative or spouse of at least one dead civilian shows up later and demands to know why the heroes didn't save them.

Because the adventure can be just about as dark or as "four color" as you like, the GM should probably sit down and make an conscious decision before starting the game about just how dark they want the tone to be. Bear in mind that if the PCs see the villains routinely use lethal force, they're probably going to get a lot more casual about taking human life themselves, and are much more likely to start killing the villains rather than trying to take them prisoner, which could effectively take them out of action in the later scenarios. And we only have a limited number of replacements in Appendix B.

**Powers That Could Mess it all Up**

Supernatural scenarios like this one tend to attract supernatural player characters—and this is precisely the type of PC who is likely to have problematic superpowers. High-level telepaths, guys who can predict the future or ask a crystal ball to tell them what's really going on here. Characters like that can seriously disrupt adventures that are built around, for example, mysteries. With this in mind, we have done our best to make Strange Magic telepathy-proof.

Although the PCs won't initially understand the opposition's objectives, it's not a mystery and reading an opponent's mind won't send the plot off its rails. Figuring out where the Goth Squad intends to strike next will actually help the plot along instead of hindering it, and the big villain is a strong enough telepath himself that turning his minions against him with Mind Control is likely to be ineffective.

The only superpower you really might want to watch out for is projective teleportation. A certain amount of the plot hinges on a small but powerful artifact called the Heart of Set. If a PC has the ability to teleport it into his or her grasp, things could get screwy. If you have a PC like that in the group, give Mr. Mandrake the same ability. Then if someone teleports it away from him, he can take it back. Pencil it onto his character sheet and try not to look like you're fudging.

**A Summary of the Adventure**

Life is dull for the diabolical Mr. Mandrake. Being an evil sorcerer hasn't cured his ennui, and neither has getting away with all sorts of unspeakable crimes. It's too easy. Then he hears about an ancient artifact called the Heart of Set, a thing of fiendish, wondrous power that could give him the strength of a god and an army of zombie horrors to command. He supposes that would be something, at least, and sets out to acquire it.

Mr. Mandrake hires a bunch of gun-toting henchmen, assembles a team of super-natural supervillains and starts terrorizing the city in an effort to conceal his real objective—stealing the Heart of Set when it goes on display at the museum. He'll also need some other gems to complete the ritual and so he has been having his henchmen rob jewelry stores.

The ritual that he needs to perform in order to gain the Heart of Set's power requires a human sacrifice, and it has to be someone the caster either loves or hates. No one he loves is still alive, so he's going to snatch his old nemesis, occult investigator Gavin Kolchack and feed his soul to the powers of darkness. Can our heroes foil this evil plot?

**The Story: Scene-by-Scene**
Fairly simple, straightforward and linear (figure out the villain's fiendish plan, then go beat him up) the plot is presented in ten scenes. Some are short, some are long, some have no combat at all, some are wall-to-wall violence. You can vary the order in which you present them, but Scene 1 should always come first and Scene 10 should always come last.

**Scene 1: A Special Report**
Weird and horrible manifestations of the supernatural afflict the city. Zombies are seen in the park. Howling is heard in the night. Loathsome monstrosities have been spotted rising from the river, leaving puddles of disgusting glop behind them. A giant six wheeled hearse has been roaring around town in a cloud of unnatural mist and the masked goons driving it have been robbing jewelry stores—and racking up a huge civilian body count.

What can all this insanity possibly mean? Could it have anything to do with the huge and supposedly cursed diamond called the "Heart of Set," which is scheduled to go on display at the museum?

While the PCs investigate, they are suddenly invited to meet with Thaddeus Winthrop, chief curator of the museum.

**Scene 2: Invitation to a Bloodbath**
A brief non-combat scene. Mr. Winthrop is worried. In light of the ghastly events going on in the city, and the Heart of Set's horrific reputation, he's convinced that somebody is going to steal the gem. Probably someone big and bad. Will the PC's help protect the gem on the night it is first displayed to the public? A lot of important people are going to be there, and it would be a shame if they were to get slaughtered by psychopaths.

**Scene 3: Moonlight Madness**
But a lot of them do in fact get slaughtered by psychopaths. What a shame.

The Heart of Set is unveiled at the gala event of the season. Seconds later, Mr. Mandrake's supervillain team attacks the museum and steals it. They cause a lot of civilian casualties for not very much reason. It's just their style.

**Scene 4: Into the Night**
The villains are getting away in their "Frightmobile" (that giant six-wheeled hearse we mentioned just a moment ago). The PCs give chase, only to watch the Frightmobile vanish in a cloud of mist.

**Scene 5: The Mystery**
In the aftermath of the battle, the PCs discover that Gavin Kolchack, Occult Investigator, has been abducted from the party by the attackers. As the PCs search for clues, more than one person points them toward James Durzic, who owns the bookshop "The Road to Shambhala" and is the city's best expert on black magic.

When the PCs go to see Mr. Durzic, they find that he suspects their motives and is reluctant to cooperate. Then as they attempt to persuade him, someone lobs a grenade through his front window.

**Scene 6: Unexpected Company**
A group of hired thugs in Halloween masks assaults Mr. Durzic's store. Naturally they work for Mr. Mandrake.

If the PCs manage to keep him alive, Mr. Durzic will be grateful, and will explain to them what Mr. Mandrake is probably trying to accomplish with the Heart of Set. Now if there were only some way to find him and stop his diabolical scheme...

**Scene 7: News Flash**
Zombies! They're everywhere. Now that he has the Heart of Set, Mr. Mandrake is assembling his army of undead abominations. All across the city, the dead claw their way up out of their graves and go stumbling across town, looking for their new

master—and anyone they might like to eat along the way.

In this short non-combat scene, the PCs learn about the rising dead from a news report, and decide how to react.

**Scene 8: Bad Moon Rising**
One of Mr. Mandrake's underlings (the cyborg werewolf known as Badmoon) decides to blow a little steam by eating some people in the park. Unfortunately for him, the PCs find him just as he is getting ready to chow down. Then again, perhaps it's even more unfortunate for them.

To complicate matters, there are innocent bystanders wandering around the park, and zombies.

**Scene 9: Diamonds are a Megalomaniac's Best Friend**
Mr. Mandrake needs one last gem to complete the ritual and become a god. So he sends Rathbone (a sentient evil skeleton in sunglasses and a beret) and some more hired thugs to steal it from a jewelry store. Fortunately, the PCs are there to stop them.

If they don't yet know where to find Mr. Mandrake, a clue at the scene will lead them to him.

**Scene 10: All Hell Breaks Loose**
The PCs confront Mr. Mandrake on the grounds of his estate and try to stop him from performing the ritual. Of course, the estate itself has all sorts of perils for them to overcome before the final confrontation. Any surviving members of Mr. Mandrake's superteam will be here to give the PCs a warm welcome, too.

Mr. Mandrake is performing the ritual outside. He will sacrifice Gavin Kolchack at the end of the ceremony—which is long enough to give the PCs some time to figure out how to stop him. While he is pretty tough, Mr. Mandrake is distracted by the spell he is performing, which takes a lot of concentration, and won't be able to bring his full strength to bear against the PCs. This should give them an even chance against him.

We conclude with a section on how to deal with the adventure's aftermath. Which members of Mr. Mandrake's team will seek revenge on the PCs and how will they go about it?

# SCENE 1: A SPECIAL REPORT

**Summary:** The heroes learn about the strange and horrible things that have been happening throughout the city. As they try to track down leads and find out what sinister pattern may lie behind these seemingly unrelated events, they receive an urgent summons from the chief curator of the city museum.

**Starting:** Read the following to the players.

"Shambling figures seen in the night! The baying of wolves echoes across the urban wastelands at the city's heart! Slimy things ooze from the river, their passage marked by puddles of putrid goo! These are a few of the strange happenings that have plagued our city as of late. And just when people began to fear the night, the day became no safer. A series of brazen daylight robberies have left a swath of broken bodies and terrified bystanders as many of the city's most prominent jewelry stores have been looted. Eyewitnesses have reported that the robberies were carried out by a bizarre gaggle of monsters that arrived in a huge six wheeled hearse. The witnesses at the scene report that, as incredible as it may seem, this hearse seemed to vanish into a cloud of fog that coalesced around the fleeing vehicle."

"Stay tuned to this station for more as the story unfolds."

"This is Karen Montoya reporting. Now over to Trisha Gooche with a report on the tri-county flower show."

**Investigating:** Players may want to look into any or all of the weird and terrifying events that have plagued the city. Depending on the skill or ingenuity of the information gatherers, a number of facts may be uncovered. A Gather Information Check vs. DC 15 uncovers the following facts.

1. The figures seen in the dark stumble and stagger as if in terrible pain, like zombies from an old movie.
2. No wolves were ever seen despite the ghastly and incessant howling.
3. The slimy things at the water's edge left a stench much like rotting fish, mixed with blood and body odor. Eeeech!
4. The shambling, stumbling figures were spotted in the park (pick one from your campaign city).
5. The hearse had twin exhausts and a blower atop the hood (making it easy not to confuse with any other giant six-wheeled hearses charging around town).
6. One of the figures that robbed all those jewelry stores had the face...of a skull!
7. Several of the corpses left in the wake of the robberies were... *headless!* Decapitated! (Gasp! Choke!)
8. A huge cloud of filthy, squeaking bats burst out of the hearse in a storm of verminous wings.

9. Only gemstones were taken from the stores. No gold, no jewelry, just raw stones.
10. Hideous, maniacal laughter was heard all around the hearse. No one stayed long enough to make out much about the voice or what it might have found so amusing.
11. A gemstone called the Heart of Set will be displayed for one day only at the city museum.
12. As you may have guessed from its name, the gemstone called the Heart of Set has occult significance. What kind of occult significance? We're not sure, but we're guessing it's the very bad kind.

Whether or not you want to roleplay the encounters where the PCs learn the above from eyewitnesses, friendly reporters and so forth depends on how patient they are and how much time you have. You can abbreviate it to the short capsule descriptions above or play out individual scenes as you see fit. As a compromise, you might try running a "montage" of the PCs hunting for clues, cutting straight between one eyewitness' speech and the next, changing your voice and mannerisms to simulate each new witness.

**What's Really Going On:** The wave of horror afflicting the city has been caused by the machinations of the diabolical Mr. Mandrake. After discovering a strange tome in the Middle East, Mr. Mandrake found the book contained a spell designed to infuse the caster with obscene demonic might, and as a kind of side effect, create an army of drooling zombie slaves. Both of these things sounded good to Mr. Mandrake, so he set about trying to enact the ritual.

The incantation required five flawless jewels to tip the five points of a silver pentagram. A sixth stone was to be placed in the center. It's very hard to find completely flawless jewels—particularly emeralds (which the spell requires at least one of). After years of making quiet inquiries, Mr. Mandrake hasn't been able to find more than one gem that meets his requirements. And the sixth stone is going to be even harder to find. In fact, there is only one suitable gem on earth. A strange jewel of unknown origins called the Heart of Set. And it's about to go on display at the City Museum! What an amazing stroke of luck!

Once he realized that the Heart of Set was about to come within his reach, Mr. Mandrake knew that would have to act fast to get the other gems. But if he went around knocking over jewelry stores en-masse, it would only be a matter of time before some meddling pack of do-gooders figured out what he was up to and tried to interfere (the blind, narrow-minded fools, grumble, mutter...)

Once he snatches the Heart of Set, the timetable will accelerate even further. Who knows how many major players in the occult underworld will suddenly be on to his scheme? He's going to have to take a bold risk—something he never ordinarily does. He's known for being quiet and crafty, so to confuse the opposition, it will have to be loud and flamboyant. He'll send out a team of henchmen to rob every last jewelry store in the city as fast as they possibly can. Surely among all those gems there must be four completely flawless ones of the right size (including an emerald). In the meantime, he'll cause so much supernatural havoc, throw out so many false leads, that no one will be able to trace the outline of his real plan. It's incredibly risky, but so crazy that it just might work.

Mr. Mandrake has gathered together a group of superhuman miscreants, and used them to create a panic. Under the cover of the resulting confusion, he has sent minions out to rob every jewelry store he can think of. The scheme has worked so far, and now he is ready to grab the prize he so covets and begin his ritual of evil.

Mr. Mandrake has hired six super-powered villains to carry out his nefarious plans. They are Rathbone, a sentient skeleton with commando training. Cryptic, a mysterious being wrapped in a tattered overcoat, who has an endless supply of sharp implements and macabre tricks to unleash on his foes. Badmoon, a berserk cyborg werewolf with a taste for human flesh. The Wicked, a costumed devil armed with a high tech pitchfork. Grimson, a grotesque powerhouse created in a freak lab accident. And last, Killarina, an albino ballerina gone mad, who chops a bloody path through her enemies as she dances. Mr. Mandrake has dubbed his hirelings the "Goth Squad". He would have thought of something more baroque and sinister, but there wasn't time.

Mr. Mandrake has supplied the Goth Squad with a custom-made vehicle that looks like a hearse. People started calling it the Frightmobile, and pretty soon the Goth Squad started calling it that, too, for want of a better name.

Mr. Mandrake has created an atmosphere of unease to spook the city and keep law enforcement busy with frightened calls. All this lurid theatrical weirdness isn't really his style at all—it's just meant to terrorize the population and throw the authorities off the track of his real objectives. The shambling zombies in the park are just illusions created by Cryptic. The wild howling was Badmoon running around town and the only slimy thing in the river is Grimson, although the viscous fluids emanating from his body are certainly disgusting. Mr. Mandrake has asked Grimson to let people glimpse him at a distance, and to leave as much of his nasty glop around as possible, in places where people are sure to discover it.

Mr. Mandrake's real objective is to have Rathbone rob as many jewelry stores and snatch as many gems as possible. This seems like an odd goal for a supernatural arch-fiend who scorns material wealth, which makes it even less likely that anyone will guess the truth in time.

## Presenting the Investigation

Gathering clues should bring the heroes into contact with a variety of colorful characters. It is beyond the scope of this work to detail the many witnesses to the various happenings. A good tip to remember is that the eyewitnesses the PCs interview should display a wide range of emotions. A few examples might include: a hysterical woman who was inside a store that was robbed and witnessed the carnage firsthand, a grizzled dockworker who saw something huge and stinking descend into the river, and a shaken couple who saw zombies while walking through the park the previous evening.

**Digging Deeper:** The PCs may well press you for more details about the incidents than the sketchy descriptions above. Don't let them waste too much time chasing down leads, but be ready to supply them with a little more info about each of the freakish supernatural occurrences if they ask. Here's some extra material on each one.

### Zombies in the Park

From listening to the reports of the eyewitnesses, it seems that the "Park Zombies" have appeared five or six times over the past week. They always turn up inside the same park. There seem to be about ten of them but there may be more. Perhaps a lot more.

No one got a really clear look at them and no one has seen them closer than about thirty yards. No one has come close enough to tell whether they really look dead. People call them "zombies" because of the odd, stiff, slow way they walk. It's hard to tell whether or not they leave footprints—reports conflict.

They haven't yet smashed up any of the park's facilities and they don't seem to have

killed or assaulted anyone. Then again, there might just not be any witnesses. People disappear in the city all the time. Who is to say the Park Zombies haven't eaten any of them?

**Howling in the Dark**
Every night this week, people in the central downtown area have reported loud, terrifying howling noises. The howling has no obvious source, but there haven't been any reports of it being heard outside of downtown. No one has actually seen any wolves. Yet witnesses invariably say that it sounds like a wolf or possibly a big dog.

The sound is terribly unnerving for some reason. Witnesses always look frightened when they describe it. It tends to continue, intermittently, for about twenty minutes, always between midnight and two AM. Sometimes it starts up again around three or four and goes on for another ten minutes or so.

**Slimy Horrors from the Deep**
No one has seen anything climbing out of the river. But half a dozen witnesses report having come across marks left where something big dragged itself up from the water. Stinking pools of viscous slime are always found at these spots. Sometimes the street of sidewalk has streaks of the same goo left on it.

If the PCs have the means to perform genetic tests on the slime, the results are perplexing. The DNA is human. Or else it's the DNA of some unknown fish species. Different tests yield different results. Test the same sample twice and it will come back two different ways. That's impossible of course, but it's what the tests show.

In at least one case there was something like a footprint or a handprint left at the scene. The print was too shapeless and indistinct for anyone to figure out what kind of creature might be squelching around town. It was big, though. Bigger than any normal human foot—a size twenty-five at least.

Is there just one creature or is there a whole invading army of them? No one knows.

**Brazen Daylight Robberies**
There have been four robberies so far, all of them brutal. The modus operandi is always the same. A team of between four and seven miscreants, all wearing Halloween masks, burst into a jewelry store and open fire wildly in all directions. They don't usually say anything to the employees and patrons, they just fire off a few bursts and start grabbing all the jewels they can lay their hands on. The robbers only steal gemstones. They don't take an interest in jewelry, gold ingots or even in cash.

It's hard to tell what provokes them to violence. No one has tried to resist the robbers so far. Yet multiple people have died at every crime scene. In one case they butchered everyone in the store for no discernable reason. They have decapitated victims at three of the four crime scenes. No one has actually seen them cut anyone's head off, so it's unclear what kind of tool they use to do it.

There are no security tapes of any of the robberies. In every case the gang managed to locate the tape and destroy it. But a traffic camera across the street from the third robbery caught a little footage of their getaway vehicle pulling up in front of the store. It really does appear to be a giant, six-wheeled hearse. More on this below.

Disturbing accounts from the survivors of two crime scenes indicate that at least one of the assailants isn't wearing a mask. He actually has a skull for a head. And sunglasses.

**The "Frightmobile"**
As noted above. The gang that robs jewelry stores travels in a huge, weird vehicle that looks like a giant six-wheeled hearse, with twin exhausts and a blower on the hood. People have taken to calling it the "Frightmobile". Why hasn't anyone noticed a vehicle like that riding around town? No one has. Nor have any of the local body-shops or automobile customization firms done a job like that on a hearse. Not recently and not ever. It surely isn't street-legal, but it appears to have a license plate (although no one has had a chance to read it yet).

Reportedly, the "Frightmobile" vanishes into a cloud of mist after each robbery. That seems hard to believe. But then again, witnesses also claim to have seen a swarm of bats emerging from the car, (which also seems pretty improbable) and footage from a traffic camera across the street from the second crime-scene confirms it. The tape shows a cloud of bats bursting out of the Frightmobile's open door. If that's actually possible, why not a car that vanishes in a cloud of mist?

**The Heart of Set**
This gem has a long, unsavory history. Nobody knows who owned it first or where it was unearthed—there have been rumors that the 4th Baron DeGuis dug it out of an Egyptian tomb in the 18th Century, but his estate was burned by an enraged mob during the French Revolution and no records survived its destruction. Considering his reputation for black magic, cannibalism and deviance, perhaps that's for the best.

Alistair Crowley and le Compte de Saint Germain were both reportedly eager to possess the gem, though neither of these notorious occultists ever actually managed to lay their hands on it.

For most of the 19th and early 20th Century it resided in the collection of the troubled Gnarwood Family, hereditary Counts of Twittenham-Wickersham on the Wold. Plagued by madness, suicide, drug addiction and necrophilia, there weren't very many of them left by the 1930s, and the remaining family members perished in an unspeakable double-glazing episode, far too vile to describe in the present volume. Distant cousins divided up their possessions and the Heart of Set was purchased by an anonymous collector who apparently still owns the gem.

No one has been able to confirm the rumors that some of the Heart of Set's optical properties and certain details of its workmanship are totally unique. Nor is there any consistent account of the gem's exact size—although it supposed to be huge. It has never been on public display until now.

The moment the PCs try to make inquiries about the Heart of Set at the Museum, they are immediately ushered in to see Mr. Winthrop, who is delighted to see them and shocked that they somehow knew he needed his help.

**Getting to the Next Scene:** Neither this first scene nor the next one have much action in them. That means you probably want to get through them fairly quickly, to keep your PCs from getting restless.

The next scene begins with Thaddeus Winthrop, chief curator of the City Museum, asking the PCs to help him protect the Heart of Set from being stolen. You should have Mr. Winthrop contact the PCs *before* they get frustrated that their investigations are going nowhere.

If they decide to visit the City Museum, Mr. Winthrop greets them heartily at the door and says he is amazed that they somehow knew he wanted them to contact him. Of course they didn't—it's just a coincidence, but he's still very impressed.

## WHAT IF THE PCS WON'T PLAY BALL?

Some Player Characters are so paranoid that they would never accept an invitation from an NPC like Mr. Winthrop, and will stay convinced that it must be some kind of trap, no matter how broadly you hint that this is where the plot is supposed to lead. Others will resist out of sheer cussedness.

If your PCs refuse to attend the gala event where the Heart of Set is presented to the public, let them find out afterwards about the robbery and kidnapping and how it degenerated into a bloodbath. You probably don't need to underscore the fact that they could have prevented it if they had been on hand—they'll get the picture.

In the meantime, restructure the narrative to match what the PCs do. If they go hang around downtown to discover the source of the mysterious howling, go straight to Scene Eight ("Bad Moon Rising"). If they keep trying to track down information on the Heart of Set, let them find out about James Durzic and his bookstore "The Road to Shambhala." Then pull Scene Six ("Unexpected Company") on them when they go talk to Mr. Durzic. If they stake out jewelry stores, they get lucky and pick the right one. Go straight to Scene Nine ("Diamonds are a Megalomaniac's Best Friend"). You could even put off the robbery at the museum for another night to let them get a chance at stopping it after they've played through one of the other scenes, if you're feeling kind.

## MR. WHO?

As soon as the PCs hear that monstrous supernatural forces threaten the city, why don't they try to go find Mr. Mandrake and beat the evil stuffing out of him?

It's important to remember that the PCs have never even heard of Mr. Mandrake before. He's a hideously powerful villain, but he has always kept a very low profile, limiting himself to revolting crimes that he could get away with. He has never fought a superhero, never spent a night in jail and never even been suspected of a crime. He's so powerful and so cunning that even other sorcerers don't know about him. In his secret identity (Dr. Theron Anton West) he is known as an academic expert on the occult and esoteric traditions, but no one seriously suspects this rich dilettante of having any real magical powers—he certainly doesn't claim to.

This adventure is going to be his grand entrance as a villain—the moment at which he reveals himself to the world.

If your PCs have contacts in the supernatural underground, none of these informants know who is causing these events (and the fact that they don't know scares them silly).

STRANGE MAGIC

# SCENE 2: INVITATION TO A BLOODBATH

**Summary:** Mr. Winthrop, head curator at the local museum, contacts the heroes to discuss arrangements for security work while the Heart of Set is in town. He's heard the reports about jewelry thefts and weird happenings, and this combined with the Heart of Set's sinister reputation has convinced him that there could be an attempt to steal it at any moment.

**Starting:** Read to the players.

"Hello, my name is Mr. Thaddeus Winthrop and I am head curator at the museum. I have great concerns that an exhibit displayed tomorrow is in danger of being stolen. I would like to acquire your services for the evening—compensation can be arranged. I do not feel that museum security is capable of handling the kind of threat we may be facing. Local police will have a presence outside the museum but six officers don't seem like enough to keep the Heart safe. I also have concerns for the safety of the guests. High-standing members of the academic world and a lot of society people will be in attendance. So will that movie star, what's his name...Hunk Manly."

"I have faith that the safety of both the guests and the museum will be better off under the protection that will be provided by your presence."

**Following Up:** Players may want to get more information on the Heart of Set, and on the celebration planned for tomorrow night. Upon request, Mr. Winthrop will provide a list of guests attending the exhibit. Depending on the skill or ingenuity of the information gatherers, a number of facts may be uncovered.

Mr. Winthrop is willing to tell them anything he knows, but they have to ask him. Facts that Mr. Winthrop knows are marked with

an asterisk *. To learn the other facts, they will have to ask elsewhere.

1. The Heart of Set really was discovered in Egypt. It's unclear whether the Baron deGuis excavated it himself, as he claimed, or just bought it from a tomb-robber.*

2. The Heart of Set is a huge black diamond. Yes, that's right, a black diamond. How is that possible? No one knows. It has other optical qualities that are just as improbable and seem equally hard to explain.*

3. The Heart is reputed to have magical properties. Mr. Winthrop does not know what those properties might be.*

4. No one knows when the Heart was first cut, but it was over two thousand years ago. The setting on the jewel when the Baron owned it was typical of the late Alexandrine period, just prior to the Roman Empire's conquest of Egypt. It was badly damaged and so the jewel is now displayed naked, with no setting at all. Of course, the jewel might have been reset during the late Alexandrine period, and it could be far, far older.*

5. Hunk Manly hosts the TV show American Daredevil. He is rumored to have super powers.

6. The Mayor collects occult paraphernalia.*

7. Doctor Edward Pennington, rumored vampire hunter, is against publicly displaying the Heart. Privately Mr. Winthrop agrees, but what can he do?*

8. Gavin Kolchack, occult investigator, will be attending. A freelancer, Gavin mostly works for the Chicago tabloids—primarily the infamous "Daily Express." *

9. Millionaire industrialist Carrington Adam Hurst and his wife Diana are flying in from Pittsburgh to attend. Mr. Hurst is a well-known philanthropist.*

10. Who really owns the Heart of Set? The museum does, now. Three months ago a member of the board told Mr. Winthrop that the Heart's owner had died, and that a law firm in Copenhagen which had handled the owner's affairs been looking for a suitable museum to donate it to. The law firm (Mr. Winthrop does not recall their name) did not reveal the former owner's identity.*

11. Doctor Theron Anton West, noted occult expert, has declined to attend the exhibit due to his enmity with Gavin Kolchack.*

### Reading Mr. Winthrop's Mind

If any of the PCs are untrusting enough to use Telepathy or Mind-Control on poor old Mr. Winthrop to find out what he knows, they will learn that he is not trying to lure them into some kind of trap. He is exactly what he appears to be: a shy old man who loves art history and who fears for his museum. If they haven't asked him why he's afraid the Heart of Set will get stolen, they can learn it here with just a cursory viewing of his thoughts—it's in the forefront of his mind.

**Investigating Deeper:** There is not much time for the PCs to dig deeper into these matters. Each hour that they spend tracking down leads outside the museum is another hour that they can't spend familiarizing themselves with the site's layout and defenses. Nonetheless, in playtesting we found that some Players will insist on doing more investigative work.

Here are some answers to the questions that they may run around asking. Please note that Mr. Winthrop does not know very many of these things himself. Apart from the sections on his own motives and on Carrington Adam Hurst, the PCs are going to have to find these answers outside his office. We've marked the items he does know with an asterisk.

**The Heart of Set**

Everyone seems to think the Heart of Set is magical, but if it is, then what does it actually do?

A Gather Information Check vs. DC 25 in the occult underworld will reveal some information. Of course, in order to make this Gather Information Check at all, the PC must already have a contact who knows something about black magic. Don't present them with this option even if they do. Only let them make the roll if they themselves think to suggest it.

If they make the roll, their contact says that the Heart is probably a kind of esoteric battery, meant to gather and store negative energies. It's not reported to be sentient or to grant its holder any specific powers—but you never know.

The contact seems unsure about all this. It's not really their area of specialty. Not many guys take an interest in artifacts like the Heart of Set without being totally evil themselves. In fact there's only one real expert they know of in town who might be trustworthy. An old German guy named James Durzic. They don't know how to get in touch with him.

**Gavin Kolchack**

A rumpled, grouchy journalist, he primarily writes for a sleazy Chicago-based tabloid called the Daily Express, but he's published articles in other places, too. He was already middle-aged by the time he became an occult investigator.

Since his (purported) encounter with a werewolf in the Chicago stockyards, he has almost exclusively produced articles about hauntings and monsters. He has written about everything from Bigfoot to the Chupacabra, although for some reason he has never written anything about UFOs (when asked why, he mutters "I don't believe in that crap").

But the article that caused him the most notoriety was the one that never got published.

A few years ago he wrote a piece that upset one of the City's wealthiest men. Theron Anton West is himself supposed to be an expert on the occult, although he doesn't make any claim to have supernatural powers himself. He lives quietly on an estate somewhere outside of town and doesn't involve himself much in Society anymore, but he is the sole heir to one of the city's largest fortunes. No one knows what was in the article, but it must have been something that Mr. West found personally offensive, because he sued the Daily Express and prevented them from publishing the story with a court order.

Gavin Kolchack himself has never said what was in the unpublished article. He has hinted that this is because he is himself under an injunction from the court not to talk about it.

Mr. West must still be mad about this matter. He refused to attend the unveiling

of the Heart of Set just because the reporter might be there.

**Hunk Manly**
Yes, that is his real name. Not very many people remember that he used to be a member of the boy-band "2rU-Love" (his stage name was "Brandon", and they marketed him as "the poetic one" of the group). He was a preteen heartthrob until his voice began to change. Then he started appearing in films. First direct-to-video Disney Sequels (Traitor-Dad 3, My Mother the Car 4, and lesser efforts), then low-budget action flicks (Max Carnage, Bangslammers II) and then mainstream Hollywood fare. He released a rap album that nearly destroyed his career and then became the host of American Daredevil.

People sometimes think of this show as a step down for him (this is the guy who said the famous line "then we'll stick it in deeper" to Tom Cruise in the smash action hit "Harder & Deeper"), but American Daredevil has actually been his best vehicle so far. He gets to do crazy stunts and show off his incredible physique. People whisper that his stunts and his muscles are a little too incredible—that he's a metahuman and possibly a superhero. He refuses to address these questions.

He has a strange, Zenlike calm on the show, a kind of total oblivious cool that didn't really come out in his movies. If you watch American Daredevil or see Hunk interviewed, it becomes clear that he's either pathologically narcissistic or else genuinely doesn't care what people think of him. Whenever somebody asks him a question that he doesn't like or doesn't understand, he never misses a beat, he just says something totally unrelated.

Unmarried, he has dated a number of actresses, but never had a long-term relationship (at least that we know about).

Why is he attending the first appearance of the Heart of Set? That's hard to say, although it is of course part of a celebrity's job to stay famous, and there will be news cameras at the event.

**Carrington Adam Hurst ***
A wealthy Philadelphia philanthropist and a great supporter of the arts, everyone says that he rose from nowhere to become the nation's second-largest manufacturer of small gasoline engines (for lawn mowers, chainsaws and so forth).

The truth is that he took the fortune he inherited and made it into a much bigger one by investing in the right manufacturing companies. If you own a lawnmower that was manufactured east of the Mississippi, it probably has one of his engines in it.

Mr. Hurst has a reputation for supporting the traditional arts—symphonic music, the works of the Old Masters, opera and ballet. He regards abstract art with distrust and may consider it subversive. A political conservative, he gives a lot of his money to right-wing think tanks and advocacy groups.

He hasn't taken much of an interest in the city museum before, but an event like the unveiling of the Heart of Set was apparently too intriguing to ignore. Mr. Winthrop hopes this will be the beginning of a solid financial relationship.

Mr. Hurst does not appear to be interested in the occult at all. He's an Episcopalian and a very traditional one. As far as he is concerned, the Heart of Set is interesting because it's a big weird black diamond.

His third wife, Dianna, is much younger than he is. Apparently they met while she was a student intern at one of the nonprofits he supports. This has caused a minor scandal in Society. Apparently Dianna's parents hate him, and there are rumors that he has forbidden her to speak to them again until they beg his forgiveness.

Mr. Hurst is still very active. He plays tennis, rows and yachts whenever he gets a chance and seems to be in excellent physical shape for a man his age.

**Doctor Edward Pennington**
He doesn't claim to be a vampire hunter, but then again he doesn't claim not to be. Everyone suspects that this flamboyant, mysterious man-about-town has been stalking vampires for years. No one can agree whether that makes him a hero or just insane.

A medical doctor by profession, he's independently wealthy and lives in a Manhattan penthouse apartment, attended only by his beautiful Chinese housemaid Ping-Ping. People speculate as to whether or not she is his girlfriend.

He hasn't had an actual medical practice since his wife's sudden and mysterious death twenty years ago. A prominent New York Society physician until that time, he dropped out of sight and seems to have spent the next few years traveling in the Far East.

Five years later he returned to the US and the public eye, when he was mentioned as a suspect in the death of the reclusive Count Siegfried von Grunwald. Dr. Pennington was never prosecuted for that crime, although he did tell the press (in his usual flat, dry tone) that Count Grunwald was a vampire.

When members of the press ask him if he hunts vampires, he refuses to say either yes or no. Instead he replies that vampires are real, that they are dangerous and that someone should hunt them.

**Mr. Winthrop's Motives ***
If the PCs ask Mr. Winthrop why he thinks there may be a robbery attempt on the Heart of Set, he answers that it seems obvious to him. Everyone in town knows that dire forces haunt the city and that someone has been stealing as many gemstones as they can get their hands on. If the thieves are somehow connected with all the other disturbing events, it seems likely that they'd try to steal the Heart of Set. And even if they aren't, it's a 65 carat diamond! How could they resist it?

If a Player Character thinks to ask around the criminal underworld to see if anyone has been fencing a lot of stolen jewels lately, then with a Gather Information Check vs. DC 15 they can learn some disturbing news.

Once the current wave of jewel thefts got underway, most of the local fences got ready to start unloading all the stolen gems that they were sure would start flooding in. But it never happened. Everyone is perplexed. No one has attempted to sell any of the stolen jewels. What the @#$%?

**Optional: What Was in Gavin Kolchack's Unpublished Article?**
Gavin Kolchack is under a court order not to talk about the article that nearly cost him his job, and that's all he's willing to say about it. His former editor has moved on to a job on the other side of the world (in Hong Kong) and no one else at the Daily Express knows what was in it.

It's possible that the PCs could find out anyway, by pulling strings with the courts, reading Gavin's mind or some other piece of Player Character deviousness. If they do come up with some kind of scheme to get their hands on the lost article, do your best to make sure it doesn't fall into their hands before you're ready to spring Scene Ten ("All Hell Breaks Loose", see Pages 96 to 105) on them. They are sure to figure out that Theron Anton West is the arch-villain behind this whole plot if they read the article, and they are sure to want to go confront him at his house, short circuiting the rest of the plot.

What does the article actually contain? It's about a purportedly haunted site in Texas, where thirteen murderers were betrayed by the woman who loved them all, and were buried in secret, alive. It is said that their evil, hungry souls rise from the hill every thirteenth day of every thirteenth month, to spread havoc and woe across the dusty Texas plains.

Gavin wasn't able to complete his study of the "Legend of the Thirteen Graves." He visited that part of Texas, where he found that there was a disturbing pattern of disappearances in the local towns, going back nearly a hundred years. He began to suspect, however, that the legend was a lie—that it covered some even darker secret. Something to do with the little town of Ash Home.

Then Theron Anton West arrived. Gavin knew him in college, and felt uneasy around him even then. Their paths have crossed many times since. The article says that Mr. West has always been associated with the very darkest kind of magic. That wherever he goes, bad things happen. Once Theron West arrived, Gavin decided it would be safer to leave.

Six months later there were reports that all the town elders in the tiny Texas farming community of Ash Home were found dead in a single night. Their homes also seemed to have been burglarized—many of their personal possessions were missing. The authorities found odd religious artifacts in each of their houses, as though they had all been devotees of some weird cult.

That same night, someone dug an enormous hole beneath the hill that looms above the town, and removed something from a hidden chamber underneath it. No one could understand how a hole that deep could have been dug in a single night, even with a backhoe. Of course if someone had used heavy machinery to dig the hole it would have left tire tracks or caterpillar tread marks, and there weren't any. The Thirteen Ghosts never plagued Texas again.

## What if the PCs Figure Out Who Mr. Mandrake is?

If through some awful turn of luck the PCs realize that Theron Anton West is Mr. Mandrake before you are ready, there are a few things you can do to preserve the plot-arc. You could decide that Mr. West has used his sinister powers to conceal the location of his estate from the world. No telephone directory or tax records list his address any more and no one can recall where his house might be. Let the PCs either break the spell or find someone who can (perhaps James Durzic) whenever you are ready to spring Scene #10 on them.

Or, if for one reason or another that seems unlikely to work, you could just re-order the sequence of scenes. They could be on their way to confront Mr. Mandrake, only to hear reports of Badmoon running amok in the Park (see Scene 8 "Bad Moon Rising" on Page 69), or Rathbone looting Gellman Brothers (see Scene 9 "Diamonds are a Megalomaniac's Best Friend" on Page 79).

You could even let the PCs invade his home and face its dangers, only to find that Mr. Mandrake himself isn't there, and won't be back until the night of the sacrifice.

**Getting to the Next Scene:** The PCs are already in the museum, so this scene should flow directly into the next one. Once the PCs finish talking to Mr. Winthrop, ask them if they want to look around the museum, talk to the head of security and prepare for tonight. If they'd rather go out and do some more investigating, tell them that the gala begins at 9:00 PM and carefully time their activities as the clock ticks toward the fatal hour. If it seems to you that the Players are getting lost or bored or bogged-

down, announce that it's after eight and they have just enough time to get back to the museum before nine—if they hurry.

**NPCs for This Scene:** There's only one NPC for the Player Characters to interact with in Scene Two—here he is.

**Chief Curator Thaddeus Winthrop**

**PL:** 4

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 16 (+3)
**Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0 **Defense:** 2
**Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Concentration 3 (+3), Computers 2 (+5), Diplomacy 7 (+7), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+4), Knowledge (Art) 7 (+10), Knowledge (Business) 3 (+6), Knowledge (History) 7 (+10), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+7), Notice 1 (+4), Profession (Foundation Executive) 2 (+5), Profession (Museum Curator) 7 (+10)
**Feats:** Connected
**Complications:** Shy, doubts his own worth
**Background:** Thaddeus Winthrop has always loved art. It's been the sole consolation in his shy, unhappy life. He's past sixty and still carries a fading torch for his college sweetheart, Eustacia Morgenstern. She was, alas, the only girl he ever dated and she left him to marry a jock, who treated her badly. Forty years later he's nearly over the hurt, but he supposes it's far too late—he'll never get married now. Particularly if he dies tonight.

His painful shyness constantly trips him up. No misanthrope, he likes people but he finds them distressing. He'd bury himself in the study of art forever if he could, and never talk to anyone again. But he'd be lonely if he did, he supposes.

While he has very few close friends, Mr. Winthrop has developed a bond with Mr. Chatham, his vulgar, casually obscene chief of security. Chatham likes him, feels sorry for him, and insists on being his pal, despite Winthrop's shyness. They often play chess together and talk about art.

It was difficult for Mr. Winthrop to overcome his reserve and anxiety to contact the PCs. But he knows it has to be done.

His motives are mixed. Not only is he afraid that people might get hurt and the museum might get damaged, but he's also afraid of losing his job in the ensuing scandal. Mr. Winthrop isn't a PhD, like most museum curators—he's a political appointee who worked for one of the wealthy foundations that supports the museum and they pulled strings (against his wishes) to get him the job. He's always felt ashamed of the fact that so many more qualified people got passed-over for his position and as a result, he's always worried that his job will get taken away from him. He fears for his personal safety, too. The jewelry robberies have all been exceptionally brutal and if something happens at the opening, it could easily degenerate into a bloodbath.

**Role Playing Notes:** Mr. Winthrop's is nervous and it shows in his voice.

# Scene 3: Moonlight Madness

**Summary:** The Heart of Set makes its first public appearance at a celebrity gala event in the museum. The heroes provide security. At midnight, the moment when the Heart is to be revealed, The Goth Squad attacks.

**Read to the Players:** The entrance to the museum is full of activity, museum staff just finishing the installation of a metal detector. A red carpet is being laid down the steps leading up two the museum and two spotlights flank the front of the building. Several policemen stand by the spotlights drinking coffee yet on guard for any trouble. Shotgun wielding museum security guards stand in front of the entrance, nervous looks on their faces. All eyes turn to the heroes as they approach the museum. At the entrance, Mr. Winthrop greets them with a look of relief on his face.

"Greetings friends, your arrival is most welcome" he wheezes. " My apologies if I seem harried, but there is so much to do yet. Let me show you around the museum".

Mr. Winthrop gives the heroes a quick tour before heading to the main exhibit hall. The main exhibit hall is quite large and circular, with various displays around its circumference. The walls are covered with a colorful collection of medieval tapestries and a lush red carpet covers the floor—a tacky detail that a major donor insisted on. The ceiling is one large skylight, the fading rays of the sun filtering through to fill the room with a dying reddish light. Museum staff hustle to and fro with a million different tasks to finish. In the center of the room, a cordoned off area denotes where the Heart will be displayed. Mr. Winthrop then takes his leave to finish final preparations for the festivities.

**Interlude:** The heroes have a few hours before guests start arriving. They may take this opportunity to examine the layout of the museum more carefully. Things of note include all entrance and exits, museum camera surveillance, number of security personal inside the museum, intruder detection equipment and direct protection for the Heart.

The easiest way to find these things out is to talk with the museum's head of security, Mr. Chatham. Unlike a lot of cops and

security consultants, Mr. Chatham doesn't have a problem with metahumans and he'll be perfectly cooperative—Mr. Winthrop says the PCs are here to help and that's good enough for him. He will answer all their questions pertaining to security. He doesn't know much of anything about the Heart of Set itself, or about the recent supernatural events plaguing the city.

1. There is one main entrance and there are three secondary entrances/exits.
2. A loading dock is at the rear of the building.
3. Close circuit cameras are placed in every room of the museum and are monitored twenty- four hours a day from a small room on the main floor (See "Security Center", Page 32).
4. There are a dozen armed security guards inside the museum
5. Each guard will be armed with either a shotgun or an assault rifle—they're taking no chances!
6. The Heart is enclosed in three inches of bulletproof glass (Toughness 5). It's already in the display case by the time the PCs arrive.

By nine o'clock, guest start to filter in. Outside the building, photographers snap pictures, the incessant flashing of the cameras lighting up the stygian darkness of the night. Limousines arrive at a steady pace to disgorge their affluent passengers. Paparazzi wait to catch a glance of one of Hollywood's darlings, Hunk Manly. After the guests arrive, champagne and caviar are served by waiters in tuxedos, ready to cater to the every need of their charges. Exited conversation plays about the exhibit room as Miles Davis tunes are played over the sound-system.

**Role Playing Notes:**

1. Many of the guests will stop to speak a few words to the heroes.
2. Gavin Kolchack will approach one of the player characters and ask for a statement. He won't answer questions himself—if a PC asks him why he's here he'll just ask them why they're evading *his* questions.
3. Hunk Manly will be seen writing autographs and taking pictures with some of his fans in attendance.
4. Hunk Manly will offer the most "buff" hero an invitation to be a guest on his television show.
5. An obnoxious know-it-all yuppie named Harvey Klieg will try hitting on a female hero. He does this by cornering her and trying to tell her how much he knows about some obscure subject.
6. Carrington Adam Hurst will offer the heroes a grant if they would be interested in starting a team. Alas, fate has other plans. Read on.

**Festivities:** At midnight the main event will commence. With great fanfare Mr. Winthrop will give a little background speech on the Heart of Set, its unique properties and troubled history. At the conclusion of his speech, the shroud over the Heart will be removed so all can see the fabled jewel.

A moment later, the skylight will shatter, spraying glass onto the guests, and a devil with a pitchfork will land in the middle of the room. Seconds later, gunshots can be heard outside as Killarina dances her way through the security forces. From the shattered skylight a half dozen ropes will fall into the room and six of Mr. Mandrake's henchmen, dressed in commando outfits and wearing various Halloween masks, will spread out and attempt to hold people hostage.

A tremendous crash announces Grimson's arrival—he smashes his way through the

west wall at the same time as the henchmen hit the floor.

Silently, Cryptic slides through the main entrance to the hall and prepares to unleash some of his macabre tricks.

**(Running the First Combat of the Adventure)**

The Wicked will use Satan's Stick [his pitchfork] to smash the glass covering the Heart to shreds. He will then attempt to grab the occult artifact and then use his super-leap to exit through the skylight. He will run Mr. Winthrop through if he gets the opportunity, laughing maniacally at his speared captive. The Wicked will not attempt to stay engaged in melee with any of the heroes, as his job is to get out with the Heart.

Killarina will slice her way through all opposition in front of the museum. She fights to kill and often beheads her victims. If superheroes are standing in her field of view, she will attack them in preference to all other targets. When she draws blood from a hero, she will go berserk. After finishing off anyone outside, she will enter the exhibit room, leaving a trail of broken bodies behind her.

After smashing through the wall of the exhibit room, Grimson will attack the largest or toughest target. If his brute personality is in effect, he lacks any sort of subtlety and just bashes away until his target is down. If his intelligent personality is present, he will display a keen sense of tactics, cutting weaker PCs off from the rest of their team and using all the innocent bystanders for cover.

Cryptic will use his homunculi to attack the nearest hero while using his Hangman's Noose to drag Gavin Kolchack toward him. He will avoid close combat at all costs. Cryptic's job is primarily a support role—he's here to grab Gavin Kolchack and to cover the Goth Squad's retreat. When The Wicked seizes the Heart, Cryptic will open his overcoat and release a huge swarm of bats, effectively obscuring the view of anyone in the exhibit hall. Cryptic will then withdraw, dragging Gavin Kolchack with him. It's critical to the plot that the Squad take Mr. Kolchack with them when they leave, so you probably want to let Cryptic seize him at a moment when the PCs are distracted. It will take a lot more work on your part to put him in the hands of the Goth Squad after this scene ends—for one thing, the PCs will know he's important and will try harder to protect him.

As the Goth Squad leave, the Frightmobile, driven by Rathbone, will crash its way up to the front of the museum, demolishing several police cars. Mr. Mandrake himself is inside, although he won't get out of the car and engage the heroes directly during this scene or the next one.

The Squad members will make for the Frightmobile as soon as it arrives, engaging anyone in the way just long enough to get past them and reach their getaway car. The Frightmobile will then gun its huge engine and roar off down the road. If members of the Goth Squad are unable to enter the Frightmobile, they will split up and attempt to arrive at predetermined pick up spots.

The Goth Squad will make no attempt to make sure that their paid henchmen can get free. The thugs are there just there to cause a distraction. They have no knowledge of the Squad's hideout or any clue of what Mr. Mandrake is up to. We have more on them under the section "Interrogating Captives" in Scene 5, on Pages 55-58.

**Role Playing Notes:**

1. The Wicked is convinced that he is the Devil in the flesh. He'll play this up, pompously ranting about how he is the Devil and he has come to do the Devil's work. How the Unrighteous will be judged and they that are not written into the Book of Life shall be cast into his Lake of Fire, etc, etc, ad nauseum.

2. Killarina is a blood-crazed psychopath. Once she finishes off the policemen outside, she will mince delicately around the hall, trying to inflict as many civilian casualties as possible, attacking the party guests in preference to the PCs. She can be very funny if you play her the right way. Make sure the PCs know that she is using real ballet moves. You might even let one of the PCs recognize her and read aloud from her origin.

3. The henchmen are mercenaries and will seek to preserve their own lives if the fighting goes against the Goth Squad.

4. Grimson has a split personality. There is a 50/50 chance the he will show as a simpleminded brute incapable of complex thinking or a cunning intelligent fighter who waxes eloquent as he bashes his foes.

5. Cryptic never makes a sound and is devoid of emotion. He does not strike out of anger, does not expose himself to unnecessary risks and has no mercy.

6. Hunk Manly will attack the nearest henchman. He doesn't have any superpowers, he's just loves attention and sees this as his chance to get a lot of it.

7. Many of the guests will flee in terror, and will run around getting in the way, no matter what the PCs tell them to do.

8. Carrington Hurst will draw a hidden Glock automatic pistol, and shoot anyone trying to attack his wife. He may also shoot someone he only thinks is menacing his wife, if things get really confusing.

9. Mr. Chatham will enter the exhibit hall from the east, engaging the nearest attacker with lethal force.

**Getting to the Next Scene:** This is an easy one. At a certain point the surviving members of the Goth Squad will jump in the Frightmobile and go roaring off down the street. When the PCs chase them, the next scene begins.

**If the PCs Win:** Either replace whatever losses the Goth Squad have taken from the list of back-up villains in Appendix 2 (see Pages 128-135) or reward your PCs by making them face that many fewer villains in the climactic battle at the end of the adventure (see Scene Ten, "All Hell Breaks Loose" on Pages 96-105).

In playtesting we found that it's actually quite difficult for most PC groups to prevent the theft, whether they maul the villains badly or not. Still, they do occasionally manage to pull it off. You will have to make some adjustments to the plot if they do.

If the PCs managed to keep the Goth Squad from stealing the Heart of Set, you are going to have to stage an improvised encounter in which the Goth Squad makes another attempt to steal it (either from the PCs or the museum, depending on who has it in their possession) or else change the rules slightly, and say that Mr. Mandrake doesn't actually need the Heart of Set to perform the ritual that will make him into a living god—it would just make it easier. If you take this second approach, be sure to

eliminate all references to the Zombies from later in the text. No graves get violated from the inside, no undead ghouls are staggering around Mr. Mandrake's estate or the city park.

**If the PCs Lose:** A big loss here isn't fatal to the rest of the adventure. In fact the rest of the scenario actually flows better if the Goth Squad manage to steal the Heart of Set and kidnap Gavin Kolchack.
If you think they would be too discouraged by a total rout, let them kill or capture at least one member of the Goth Squad—it will make them feel better.

You don't want to railroad the PCs into losing this fight, or hand them a defeat that looks unfair. They'll resent it, and once you've gained their enmity, they'll start misbehaving and undercutting your game. To prevent this, we've built this scene to be subtly biased against them. The PCs may well outnumber the supervillains in this scene, and none of their opponents are tougher than PL 10. But the PCs have been taken by surprise, and there is a whole room full of hostages to protect. If they behave like heroes, the PCs should be at a decided disadvantage. After a loss, whether it's partial or complete, the GM should move on to the next scene as quickly as possible, to let the player's wash the bad taste of defeat out of their mouths as quickly as they can.

## What if They Save Gavin Kolchak?

This really shouldn't be allowed to happen. But then again what plan ever survives its first contact with Player Characters?

If the PCs manage to foil Mr. Mandrake's plan to snatch his old enemy and use him in a human sacrifice, the GM has two options. Either the Goth Squad makes another attempt to snatch Gavin Kolchack or Mr. Mandrake finds another subject.

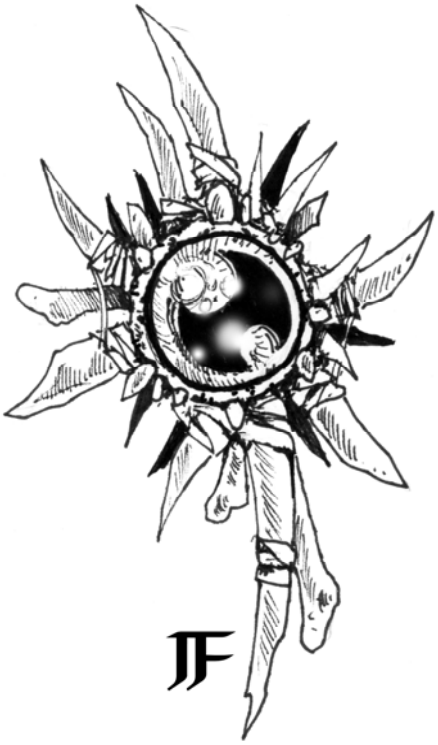
If you pick the first option and the Goth Squad makes another try at Mr. Kolchack, there are two ways to handle it. You can improvise a scene where the Squad attacks the PCs at a distracted moment and tries to pluck him out from under their protection, or else you can play it safe and have them grab him when the Player Characters aren't around.

Both approaches have risks. Give the PCs another chance to beat up the Goth Squad and they may take more of them out. This could leave less of them available to back up Mr. Mandrake in the final scene (although we have some extra characters in Appendix B, Pages 128-135 that you could replace some of his losses with). Worse, they might win again and then the whole thing is for nothing. If on the other hand you have them seize their target while the PCs aren't looking, your players may feel cheated. This can lead to all kinds of misbehavior later on. Or to them quitting the game. Take whichever course seems safest!

If Mr. Mandrake finds another potential victim, you can get some extra juice out of the scene by making it an NPC we've seen before. It could be Dianna Hurst (see Page 43) or Nora Fleeber (See Page 94) or Hector Pachanga (See Page 91) or some other NPC the Player Characters have already encountered. It could even be one of their own friends or acquaintances, from outside the scenario altogether.

As the PCs will later learn, the ritual requires that the victim be killed by someone who deeply adores or passionately despises them. So Mr. Mandrake will also seize somebody who loves them, and mind-control this second victim into performing the sacrifice. How evil is that?

So, if he has grabbed Dianna Hurst, he will have her mother kill her (he would have taken her husband, but he doesn't love her enough). If he has taken Nora Fleeber, it will be her husband, Dave. If it's Hector Pachanga then it will be his father who does the deed and so forth.



**The Heart of Set**
**Size:** Miniscule
**Toughness:** 35 (And Immune to all Heat-Based attacks)
**Powers:** See below

**Description:** A gigantic diamond, black as obsidian. It's not exactly transparent, you can't really see through it. People who stare into it for a long time sometimes say that it looks as though it is filled with jet black liquid, slowly moving. It looks like the kind of blackness you could fall into. Some people find that it hurts to look at the Heart of Set for very long. Others find it irresistibly fascinating to stare at. In either case, anyone who isn't an intrinsically mystical being will see afterimages of the gem for a several seconds if they look directly at it (in fact the party guests are experimenting with this effect during the gala event). Since many of the people who've stared at it for a long time have also gone insane, this is difficult to confirm.

The gem's optical and chemical properties show that it is, impossibly, a diamond, despite its coal-black coloration. Yet it has aberrant qualities that resemble no diamond the experts have ever seen. Shoot it with a laser, and it remains cold. Shine a bright enough white light on it, and it will produce an inexplicable black aura. This effect does not show up on photographs.

## WHAT IF THE PCS SNATCH THE HEART OF SET?

There's no telling what some player characters will try. PCs who steal the Heart of Set for themselves will find that it doesn't do much for them. The Heart only works for characters with a PL of at least 13. It can enhance your ability to animate the dead by a factor of ten for every PL you possess above PL 11, to a maximum of x10,000. So, for example, Mr. Mandrake's power to create and control zombies is amplified a hundredfold.

Use it in the esoteric ritual Mr. Mandrake has planned and it will give you an extra Seven PL, with all the extra points to spend on new powers, stats, etc, that come with it (although you can't use these extra points to buy new skills, or any Devices or Equipment).

If any PC with the ability to cast spells gets hold of the Eye, a Knowedge (Arcane Lore) Check vs. DC 20 will tell them how to use it to disrupt Mr. Mandrake's control over any zombies he may have already created. You don't have to be PL 12 to try. Make an Opposed Arcane Lore Check vs. his skill rating (25!) If you can then beat him at an opposed Willpower Save, you have taken control of his zombies and you can command them from anywhere on Earth (or inside the orbit of the Moon) although you can't see through their eyes. Fail, and he gets to attempt a Mind Control attack on you.

If conscientious PCs want to get rid of the Heart of Set, they may find it difficult.

Breaking it is nearly impossible, and even if they did, it would still have the same powers. Hide it and Mr. Mandrake will come looking for it, sending as many supervillains, demons, etc. after it as need be.

Dump it in the heart of the sun and within a month, angry PL 12 beings composed of flaming plasma will forcibly return it to you and demand that you never try that again.

Dump it down a black hole and within a year some PL 15 extradimensional beings will come give it back to you, with a stern warning not to chuck stuff like that into their hyper-reality.

Perhaps the nighted depths of intergalactic space would be the right home for the Heart of Set. But even there, there's always the risk that some irresponsible entity will eventually find it.

If the PCs do actually manage to destroy the Heart, let them rejoice for the moment. Unfortunately, Mr. Mandrake knows how to fix it if he gets enough of its pieces together.

## WHAT IF THEY STAKE OUT THE ROOF?

Some PCs may take one look at that giant skylight and know at once that you have planned for villains to come crashing through it. They may well try to stage an ambush on the roof. For this reason, we have included a map and description for the roof of the main display area. There aren't very many good places to hide, but they may still get a chance at the Wicked and the henchmen who are with him before they get a chance to crash the party.

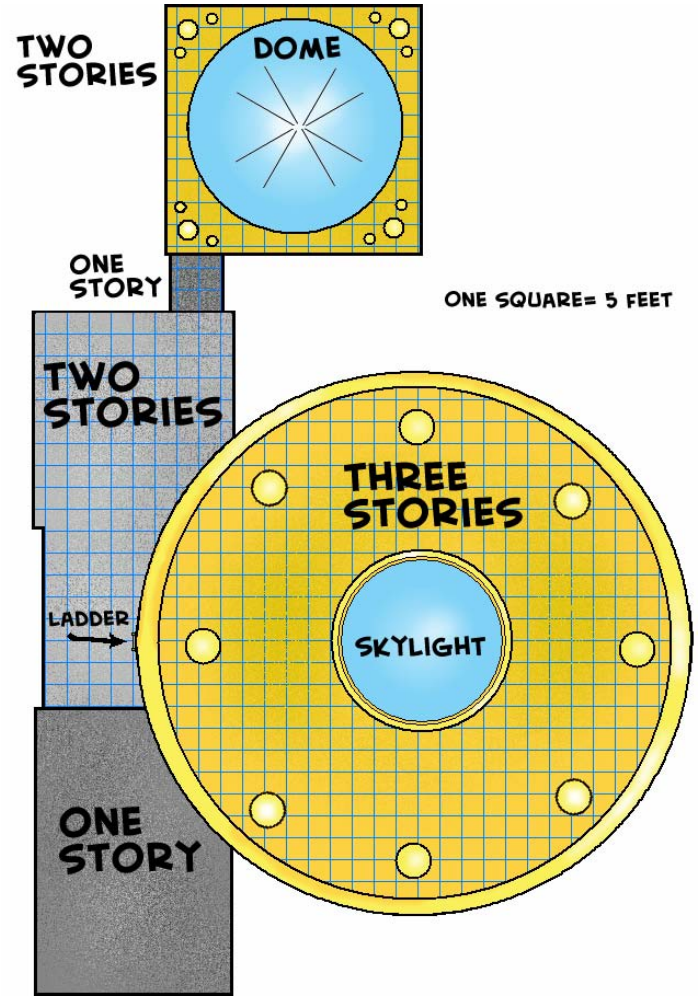
PCs who wait on the roof see two police helicopters approach at a few minutes to midnight. They fly very near the roof, and may shine spotlights on the PCs. There are no actual cops inside. The Goth Squad ambushed them an hour ago (if one of the PCs has been monitoring the police channel, they will know this).

At midnight, the doors on the side of the helicopters slide open and the Wicked and his team will leap through the skylight on their ropes. PCs who are waiting in ambush will get one round to fire on them before they go through the skylight. The Wicked is all keyed up and he won't abort the assault even if he makes his Notice Check and sees the PCs lying in wait.

It is also possible that the PCs might be able to take out or drive away the helicopters before the Wicked can strike. If so, congratulate them. Now they only have Grimson, Cryptic and Killarina to cope with. Let's hope they didn't concentrate all their forces up on the roof!

One additional note, if a PC is dumb enough to shoot down a Helicopter over the skylight, then it will plummet into the hall and may cause some serious collateral damage. Of course, a flying, super-strong PC might be able to stop this. Powers like Gravity Control, Magnetic Control or Telekinesis might also be useful here.

# MAP OF THE ROOF

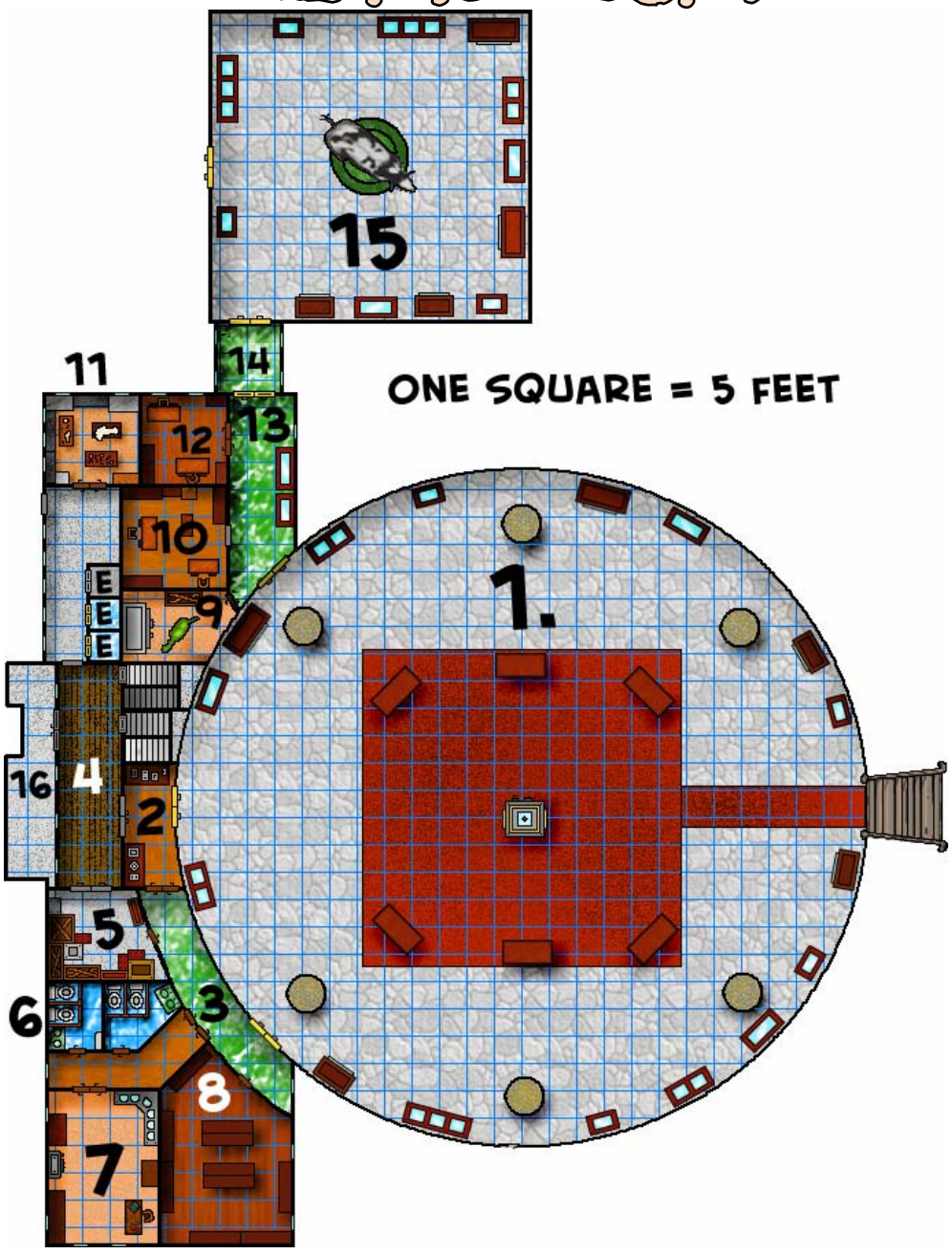



It's scary up here unless you can fly. There's no guardrail on top of the main display hall and there's a fifty-foot drop all around you. The roof itself is Toughness 5, but the big central skylight is only Toughness 2. Break it once and the whole thing will come crashing don in 0-2 rounds. A chunk of glass makes a hany improvised weapon. Assume that any large-sized piece is Toughness 1 and does 2 Damage.

You can climb down one story to the roof of the museum offices with a metal rung ladder bolted to one side of the roof. This does not require a Climb Check. The ladder is Toughness 5 and can hold up to 900 pounds. Any more weight than that and it will tear loose in 1-3 rounds. It takes one full round to climb. If you want to rip the ladder loose and hit somebody with it, overcome its Toughness and break it. (there is a –2 penalty to the damage you do if you try to yank it off from above, due to the awkward angle and poor leverage). The ladder does 5 Damage, weighs 300 pounds and is twelve feet long.

STRANGE MAGIC

# THE MUSEUM




**1: Main Exhibition Hall, 2: The Fink Room, 3: Gorewood Hall, 4: Loading Area, 5: Temp Storage One, 6: Restrooms, 7: Security, 8: Library, 9: Temp Storage Two, 10: Admin One, 11: Workshop, 12: Admin Two, 13: Toxicorp Hall, 14: Connecting Hall, 15: Secondary Exhibition Hall, 16: Loading Dock, E: Elevators**

**1: Main Exhibition Hall**
Here is where the party and the battle that follows it will both take place. The floor is made of flagstones over reinforced concrete. It's Toughness 8. The walls and ceiling are Toughness 7, while the reinforced glass skylight is Toughness 2.

Six gigantic marble pillars are spaced around the room. Each one is Toughness 5 and weighs 25 tons. Once you crack one open, you can see that it's actually made of reinforced bricks with a thin marble façade—what a rip off! If you are strong enough to use a pillar as a bludgeon, it does 10 Damage.

Knock out more than three of the pillars and the whole room will become structurally unsound. In 1-5 rounds cracks will start spreading up the walls and ominous noises will start echoing around the gallery. In another 1-5 rounds chunks will start falling from the ceiling. Some will do as little as 1 Damage to whoever they land on, others will do as much as 5. Target 1-20 random members of the crowd each round, including PCs and villains. In another 1-5 rounds bigger chunks will start plummeting into the room, doing 5-8 Damage to another 1-20 hapless victims each round. Then in another 1-5 rounds the whole room will collapse, doing 10 Damage to anyone left inside. Allow the PCs to come up with creative ways to use their powers and feats to help stop the collapse, or at least knock some falling chunks of rubble away from innocent bystanders.

Beyond the ring of pillars are a set of heavy oak tables, covered with snacks and drinks. The even is prestigious enough that he caterer is using real china and silverware, instead of disposables. A china plate does 1 Damage if flung or used like a club. A broken one does 2 if you use it like a knife. Wineglasses and wine bottles both do 2 damage if used to gash. Silverware does either 2 or 1 at the GM's option. The tables themselves weigh 200 pounds each and do 4 Damage if you pick one up, send the food and dishes flying everywhere, and hit somebody with it.

Near the edges of the room, a few guests mill around some display cases full of small Egyptian artifacts (the closest thing Mr. Winthrop could think of to go with the Heart of Set). These tabletop displays are about waist height and stand on four wooden legs—you really couldn't take cover behind one. None of the artifacts inside could really be used as a weapon. The cases themselves, on the other hand, weigh four hundred pounds and do 4 Damage. Each case is Toughness 3, but the glass panels in the top are only Toughness 1. A piece of broken plate glass does 2 Damage is used like a knife, but you risk doing 1 Damage to yourself every time you use it (Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 to avoid this) unless you wrap it with something or make an improvised handle for it

At the center of the hall stands the big glass box containing the Heart of Set. This specially reinforced bulletproof glass cube is Toughness 5 and weighs 70 pounds. If you ripped it loose and hit somebody with it, they would take 2 Damage. Toughning the cube causes a loud alarm to ring and alerts the guards in the Security Center (see Page 32). The pedestal it rests on is Toughness 8 and weighs 500 pounds. It does 4 Damage if used as a weapon. The motion detectors and the siren are located in the pedestal, so you can shut off the alarm by smashing it. Although of course that might also attract the guards' attention.

**The Rest of the Museum**
In playtesting, we found that the fight tends to stay contained to the main hall, where the Heart of Set is on display. Only seldom does it spill out into the rest of the museum. But of course there's no telling what your player Characters might do. Here is a guide to the rest of the museum, just in case you ever need any of it.

**2: The Fink Room**
A gift to the mueum from the Eustace Fink Foundation, this oddly shaped but elegantly paneled room is often used as an alternate display space. Right now the're using it as a staging area for the caterer, who is pacing up and down between his tables nervously, barking orders to a never-ending stream of his staff as they come hustling through. This event is the biggest and best he's ever been asked to cater and he's a little on edge. You can find his stats and background on Page 48, if you need them.

All the art has been (wisely) removed from the walls. Two hardwood tables covered with plates, utensils, canapes, etc. have been jammed awkwardly into the room's corners. Toughness 3, the tables weigh about 200 pounds each and do 4 Damage if used as weapons. At the GM's option, a serving fork or spoon might do as much as 2 Damage. The plates are made of heavy porcelain (disposable plates would never do for a high-level affair like this one) and do 1 Damage if flung, or 2 if you break one and use it like a knife.

This room is a logical place for people to try to take refuge during the raid. The doors are Toughness 4 and can be locked from the inside (Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock). Mr. Chatham and Mr. Winthrop are the only staff on duty tonight who have keys to the Fink room.

**3: Gorewood Hall**
Brought to you by the Gorewood Corporation—the most trusted manufacturer of landmines worldwide. Thanks to the good people at Gorewood, this hall has a beautiful green marble floor (which does not, alas, match the rest of the museum) and very nice wood-paneled walls. It's open to the public most days, and serves as an alternate display space. Right now a display of cutting-edge post-post-trans-futurist paintings are hanging on the walls (the artist specializes in YIELD, STOP and ONE WAY signs, rendered as realistically as possible as a kind of ironic commentary on the nature of representation in a commodified world). Each one is worth between ten and sixty thousand dollars, so take care!

None of the doors to the Gorewood Hall are locked at the moment—guests need to pass though here in order to reach the rest rooms.

The doors to this room are all Toughness 4 and can all be locked from the inside (a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 is required to pick the lock). Every security staffer present tonight has keys to all the doors except for the ones leading into the Fink Room. Due to an administrative oversight, only Mr. Winthrop and Mr. Chatham have the keys to the Fink Room.

**4: Loading Area**
An empty room in between the loading dock, the temporary storage rooms and the display halls. The Fire Department has extremely strict regulations against leaving boxes in this room where they might block the fire exit, so they keep it rigorously clear. There is nothing in here but a thick gray industrial carpet on the floor. The walls are a blank undecorated beige.

There are six doors leading out of this space. The steel double doors leading out to the loading dock are Toughness 5 and take a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to open without a key, (it takes a Check vs. DC 20 to do it without setting off the sielnt alarm in the Security Center).

The door leading into the room to the north is Toughness 4 and presently unlocked. If it is locked, it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to open (vs. DC 20 to do it without activating the silent alarm).

The steel doors at the opposite end of the room lead into Temporary Storage Area One (#5 on the map). They are Toughness 6 and locked (Disable Device Check vs. DC 20

to pick the lock, vs. 25 to do it without setting off the alarm).

The doors leading into the Fink Room (#2 on the map) are Toughness 4 and can only be locked from the inside (it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock). Only Mr. Winthrop and Mr. Chatham have the keys to these doors.

The stairwell doors are Toughness 5 and do not lock.

**5: Temporary Storage 1**
This is where crates and boxes are stored on their way from the loading docks or the basement storerooms to the exhibition halls. At least in theory. In fact storage space and staff time are often at such a premium that crates can sit in here for months before they get moved.

Right now a more or less random collection of crated artifacts sits in the room. The biggest crates are Toughness 4 and weigh as much as eight hundred pounds (and would do 5 Damage if picked up and used as weapons). The smallest weigh as little as ten pounds, have Toughness zero and do no Damage. You can find almost anything in between.

Space doesn't really permit us to list every last box and its contents, so if a fight breaks out in here the GM should improvise the weights and usefulness of the boxes, using the notes above as guidelines.

Please remember that every one of these crates contains something precious and breakable. Maybe priceless and breakable. And much of it doesn't actually belong to the museum—a lot of it is here on loan from other collections. Poor Mr. Winthrop will be beside himself if any of it gets smashed.

**6: Restrooms**
Open to the public, a short hall leads here from the main display area. The bathrooms were provided by the Josiah T. Crabbitt Foundation, a plaque on the wall proudly proclaims. Mr. Crabbitt was lavish in his gift—the bathrooms are luxurious, with blue marble floors and brass fittings. If only he could have seen fit to give them a little money for new lab equipment! In fact the Crabbitt Foundation is so proud of its handsome gift that have added the stipulation that these marvelous bathrooms are never to be used by the vulgar public. Mr. Winthrop chooses to ignore this provision. If the foundation gets upset, he'll claim that his security team can't keep every last bathroom scofflaw out.

The toilets are sturdily constructed. Toughness 3, it takes a Strength Check vs. DC 25 to rip them out of the wall. They do 3 Damage if wielded as weapons. The sinks are a little less solidly built. A Strength Check vs. DC 20 can yank one off the wall. Made of metal and marble, they do 3 Damage if you hit someone with them.

**7: Security Center**
A combination assembly room, break room and security camera monitoring station, this is where you can find Mr. Chatham's men when they aren't out patrolling the halls. They've never actually had to detain anyone, but if they did, this is where they would keep them.

One end of the room is covered by a bank of monitors that you can use to watch any of the security cameras in the building. Rows of chairs fill the middle of the room—this is where Mr. Chatham briefs each shift. Some mismatched furniture sits along the walls. A coffee machine rests on top of a table.

Mr. Chatham's personal desk is here—it's overflowing with paperwork. A large gun safe rests against the opposite wall. Only Mr. Chatham has the combination (although if you rummage through his desk, you can find it written down on a piece of paper with a Search Check vs. DC 20). On the night of the party, the safe is empty. It normally

contains a few shotguns and some assault rifles, but tonight they're all in use.

Mr. Chatham's desk weighs 600 pounds, packed full of papers. It does 4 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon. The tables and filing cabinets are relatively flimsy. Each filing cabinet is Toughness 3, weighs 90 pounds and does 2 Damage. The tables are Toughness 2, weigh 100 pounds and do 2 Damage. The chairs weigh about twenty pounds each and also do two Damage. Mr. Chatham's desk chair is heavier—it weighs 50 pounds, but it still does 2 Damage.

**8: Research Library**

The museum's research library is small and cramped, with nowhere to sit down. Most researchers carry materials back to their own desks to review them, much to the consternation of the Librarian..

Most of the materials on these shelves are research journals. It's a very eclectic collection, with periodicals from all sorts of scattershot fields. Egyptology and mineralogy and 18th century home-construction techniques sit next to Arctic Ethnology and the Taxonomy of Shrews. It reflects the museum's own lack of focus. They house whatever exhibits and hosts whatever programs they can get grants for—whether it's post-impressionist art or fossil walruses.

**9: Temporary Storage 2**

A second temporary storage room, for materials that aren't quite ready to go on display or haven't yet been taken back down to the basement.. Right now, a large fiberglass dinosaur takes up most of the middle of the room (it will go back into the main display hall once the Heart of Set exhibit is finished). The dinosaur replica is surprisingly sturdy, Toughness 3, it weighs 1,000 pounds and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon (perhaps you could swing it by its tail).

A large safe covers most of one wall. It's used to store particularly valuable items that are waiting to go on display. The Heart of Set, for example, was kept here while the museum staff prepared its bulletproof glass case in the Main Display Hall. At the moment the safe is empty. Toughness 10, it weighs one ton and does 8 Damage if used as a weapon. Two people could easily take cover behind it without even crouching, but first you would have to push it away from the wall—which might not be easy.

The other crates and boxes stored here range from Toughness 0 to Toughness 3, weigh up to 200 pounds and do up to 4 Damage. Many are too small to do anything any harm at all. At the GM"s option, there may be one or more antique weapons in here that a PC could use in a pinch (swords, battle axes, etc). If there are, they might do as much as 4 Damage, but would probably do more like 2 or 3.

**10: Administrative Office 1**

Crowded and cluttered, this office serves both the Research Librarian and the Friends of the Museum Society, which each have one staff member. Bitter rivals for every paper clip and staple, they don't talk to each other and each one tries to make the other's life difficult in little ways. The room itself contains two desks, some chairs, shelving units full of binders and books, and a lot of filing cabinets, all of them crammed to overflowing.

Neither the Librarian nor the Secretary of Friends of the Museum are in the office on the night of the party, although one of them has maliciously left the lights on, in hopes of blaming it on the other.

The desks are heavy, since each one is stuffed to the bursting point. Toughness 3, both weigh about six hundred pounds and do 4 Damage if someone uses them as oversized bludgeons. The office chairs weigh 40 pounds and do 3 Damage. Other items of furniture (the filing cabinets, for

example) weigh roughly a hundred and fifty pounds each and do 4 Damage.

**11: Workshop**
This is where displays get made, repaired and maintained. The staff who work here don't have offices—they come straight to the workshop and spend all their time here under the direction of the Assistant Curators.

The tables in the middle of the room are always covered with one project or another. Right now they have a stuffed polar bear and a partly disassembled dinosaur skeleton on the tables.

A dinosaur bone makes a handy weapon. Toughness 5, the biggest ones do up to 4 Damage if used as clubs. The stuffed bear is only Toughness 1. It weighs 800 pounds and does 5 Damage if you use it to clobber somebody. The tables are attached to the floor, but a Strength Check vs., DC 30 will uproot them. Toughness 3, they weigh 300 pounds each and do 4 Damage. An enterprising PC could also make good use of the various tools stored here—whether it's a rotary saw (3 Damage) or a Bunsen burner (3 Damage—Heat) or a beaker full of formaldehyde (2 Damage—take no damage if you make a Fortitude Save vs. DC 15). PC gadgeteers might also be able to improvise some sort of small explosive device (Damage 3 or so) from the cleaning fluids—but of course that's up to the GM.

**12: Administrative Office 2**
This crowded little office is where the museum's administrative staff process functions like payroll, materials requisitions and so forth. The room contains two desks, some chairs, overcrowded shelves, and filing cabinets, all of them crammed to overflowing.

Both desks are Toughness 3, weigh about four hundred pounds and do 4 Damage if someone uses them as oversized bludgeons. The office chairs weigh 40 pounds and do 3 Damage. For simplicity's sake, assume all the shelves and filing cabinets weigh roughly a hundred and fifty pounds each and do 4 Damage.

**13: Toxicorp Hall**
This display hall is brought to you by the good people at Toxicorp—the third most prominent manufacturer of poisons, pesticides, herbicides and defoliants in America. The Toxicorp Foundation is a lot more friendly and understanding than most of the funders the museum deals with, so Mr. Winthrop can use this hall to display more or less whatever traveling exhibition catches his eye. Right now it holds an exhibit from the University of Northern Greenland on the culture of the Netsilik Eskimos. Glass-top cases hold a wealth of artifacts, including two beautifully crafted harpoons that would each do 3 Damage if you broke the glass and took them out.

The cases themselves are Toughness 3, weigh 300 pounds and do 3 Damage. The plate glass in the top of a case is Toughness 1 and a really big piece may do up to 2 Damage if used like a knife.

There are two sets of double doors, one leading into the Main Display Area, the other leading into the short Connecting Hall that connects the main building to the secondary display space in the annex. Both sets of doors are Toughness 5 and can be locked from the inside. The door to the Main Display Area is unlocked and party guests may occasionally wander back here. The door to the Connecting Hall is presently locked.

It takes a key or a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to open either lock and a
Check vs. DC 25 to open them without setting off the silent alarm in the Security Center.

**14: Connecting Hall**
Usually open to the public, tonight this short hall is unlit and silent. It leads from the

main building into the secondary display hall. The door at the end of the hall is Toughness 5. Locked, it takes a key or a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to open (DC 25 to open without setting off the silent alarm in the Security Center).

Sometimes used as a display hall itself, right now its walls are covered with some of Albrecht Durer's creepier woodblock prints. A large one would weigh about thirty pounds and do 2 Damage if you break it over someone's head. A big chunk of glass from the frame could also do 1 or 2 Damage. There is really nothing else here that could be used as a weapon.

**15: Secondary Display Hall**
This large room is connected to the rest of the museum by a narrow corridor. It's about to host a traveling exhibit on the history of advertising dairy products. A gigantic fiberglass statue of a cow sits in the middle of the room, and the glass display cases running around the walls all hold priceless examples of ads and merchandising materials for milk and milk by-products, going back well into the 19th century. Grinning ceramic cows and old magazine advertisements for dairies. Piggy banks shaped like milkmen, etc.

Mr. Winthrop privately doesn't think that highly of this exhibition, but if any of the items on display here get damaged he is going to be in a difficult spot. None of it actually belongs to this museum—the whole exhibit is on loan from the Snorrison Museum in Olso. How to explain it to his board if something were to happen? Fortunately for Mr. Winthrop and the amazingly valuable items on display here (perhaps the largest collection of diary-related advertising materials in *the entire world*) the fight is unlikely to reach this room.

If it does, the giant cow is Toughness 3, weighs eight hundred pounds and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon.

The horizontal wooden display cases are Toughness 3, but the plate glass in the top of each one is only Toughness 1. A case weighs 300 pounds and does 3 Damage. The big upright cases are a little heavier. Toughness 3 (1 for the glass front) each one weighs 500 pounds and does 4 Damage.

A broken piece of plate glass makes a dandy weapon—call it 2 or even 3 Damage for a really big chunk.

**16: Loading Dock**
Tucked tastefully out of sight at the back of the building, this concrete loading platform has enough space for one good-sized truck to pull up at a time. The doors are made of steel and are Toughness 5. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick the lock, but a Check vs. DC 20 to do it without setting off the alarm. Tactically-minded PCs may decide to post someone to guard this entrance. Alas, it's wasted effort. The Goth Squad isn't coming in this way.

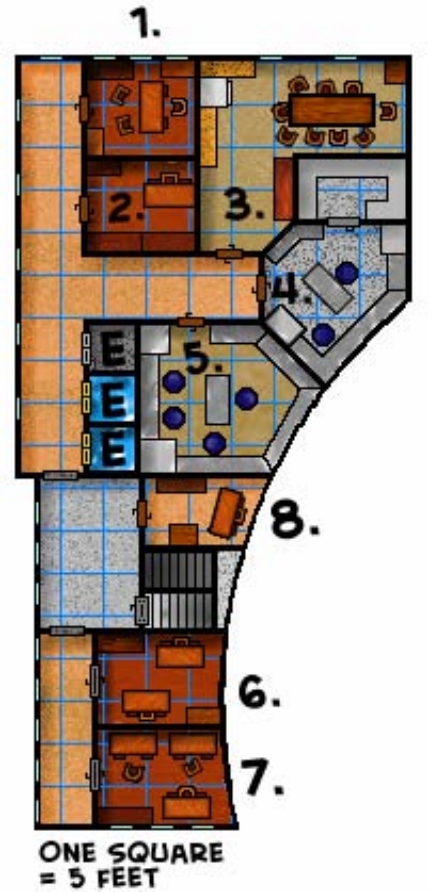
**Elevators**
The museum's elevators are uncomfortably small for a building with this many occupants, and the freight elevator is no bigger. All three elevators go down to the basement and up to the second floor. There is no special key or code required to use the elevators—visitors aren't normally allowed in this part of the museum anyway. The two passenger elevators have nice looking faux marble floors and wood-paneled walls. The freight elevator's walls and floors are bare metal, but otherwise it's identical to the other two.

The steel doors to the elevators are Toughness 7. The walls are also Toughness 7. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to pry the doors open and climb into the shaft. Being crushed underneath or on top of an elevator does 8 Damage.

**Stairwell**
The stairs are made out of concrete and steel (Toughness 8) and are set too closely

together for there to be any central space you could fall down (or chuck an enemy down). The doors are Toughness 5 and do not lock from either side. Nor is there any alarm on the doors. One set of stairs runs up to the second floor and the other goes down to the basement. This is one of the few places in the building where there aren't any security cameras.

## MAP OF THE 2ND FLOOR




**1: Mr. Winthrop's Office**
The office of Chief Curator Thaddeus Winthrop. It's frankly a cluttered mess. Papers, books and binders overflow from every shelf, the top of every filing cabinet, Mr. Winthrop's desk—in fact from every flat surface available. There are two chairs for guests (it looks as though Mr. Winthrop has recently cleared big stacks of papers off of both of them) and one for the Chief Curator himself. Anyone else will have to stand.

Mr. Winthrop's desk is Toughness 4 and weighs 700 pounds, (it's this heavy because it's packed so solidly). It does 4 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon. The bookshelves and filing cabinets are relatively flimsy. Each filing cabinet is Toughness 3, weighs 100 pounds and does 2 Damage. The bookshelves are Toughness 2, weigh 150 pounds and do 3 Damage. The wooden chairs weigh about 50 pounds each and do 2 Damage.

**2: Associate Curator's Office**
Much neater and tidier than Mr. Winthrop's overcrowded office, this is where his second-in-command works. Her name is Dr. Crimilda Pontes and she has only been in the post for a little while (hence the uncluttered office). Dr. Pontes devotes most of her time to research and very little to actually running the museum. She regards bringing the Heart of Set here as a cheap, undiignified publicity stunt, but doesn't actually care enough about the museum to feel indidgnant about it. When her grant runs out she will no doubt move on to some other museum to continue pursuing whatever it is she actually does (the comparative study of Pliocene ungulate teeth). Mr. Winthrop likes her, because unlike most of the assistant curators, she doesn't appear to hate him or regard him as an interloper. In fact she can barely remember his name.

Dr. Pontes isn't here on the night when the Heart of Set makes its debut. If for some reason a suspicious PC rumages through her office, a Search Check vs. DC 15 reveals everything they could have ever wanted to know about Pliocene ungulate teeth. And then some.

Her desk is Toughness 4 and weighs 300 pounds (which is what Mr. Winthrop's desk would weigh if it were nearly empty). It does 4 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon. Each filing cabinet is Toughness 3, weighs 80 pounds and does 2 Damage. The bookshelves are Toughness 2, weigh 100 pounds and do 3 Damage. Her chair weighs about 50 pounds and does 2 Damage.

**3: Conference Room**

The museum's one conference room doubles as their break room and kitchen. There is a refrigerator on one wall, a counter with a microwave and a toaster oven. Most people who eat lunch here sit at the big wooden conference table.

The conference table is Toughness 3, weighs 300 pounds and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon. It's big enough for three people to take cover behind, if they crouch. The chairs around the table weigh 50 pounds each and do 2 Damage. The refrigerator is Toughness 2, weighs 400 pounds, and does 4 Damage if you clobber somone with it.

**4: Artifact Restoration and Cleaning**

Steel counters run all the way around the walls of this room, metal tables nearly fill the space. Just as the sign on the door says, this room is dedicated to cleaning, maintaining and restoring the museum's artifacts. Bundles of brushes, picks and probes sit on every table. Bottles of cleaning fluids sit in racks. Microscopes and other machines rest in cradles on the wall. A large closet holds extra supplies.

There isn't much here that you could use as an improvised weapon. The chairs are Toughness 3, weigh 20 pounds and do 2 Damage if you hit somebody with them. The larger pieces of machinery weigh as much as fifty pounds and do 3 Damage.

An enterprising PC might be able to put together some kind of caustic fluid or improvised explosive out of an exotic mixture of cleaning fluids. The GM should probably set the PL of the Craft Check at 20 or so.

**5: Laboratory**

This modestly equipped laboratory handles most of the museum's research needs. Everything from mineralogy to dating tests to micrography to cleaning dinosaur bones gets done in here. There are steel counters along all four walls, cabinets full of glassware and supplies, as well as a sterilizing machine, microscopes, a centrifuge and other such scientific apparatus. Researchers sit on high round stools at the tables and counters.

The door to the lab is kept locked at night (a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 will open the lock, but it takes a Check vs. DC 25 to do it without setting off the silent alarm in the Security Room). Should an enterprising PC break in here and try to find something they can use as a weapon, there are rich pickings. Glassware (Damage 1-3 depending on the item), Bunsen burners (Damage 2, Heat), heavy pieces of machinery (up to Damage 4) and all sorts of hazardous chemicals. The steel counters and tables require a Strength Check vs. DC 30 to rip off the wall or out of the floor and do 5 Damage if used as weapons. The stools weigh 25 pounds each and do 2 Damage.

A PC gadgeteer can no doubt find even more uses for the items in this room.

**6: Assistant Curators' Office**

Two assistant curators share this office, which is actually less cramped and full of papers than Chief Curator Winthrop's. Unlike Mr. Winthrop, the Assistant curators never seem to stay for more then two years (or until their grant money runs out and they have to go seek another grant elsewhere) so they tend not to accumulate as much stuff. All of them feel contempt for Mr. Winthrop, since he isn't a real academic and he's occupying a space that one could

have. There aren't enough spaces to go around, and here's someone who isn't even a part of the community, just sitting on top of one!
Unless the PCs stop by during the day, no one is here and the lights are off. Both assistant curators dislike their boss enough that they never put in any extra hours for him.

Their desks are Toughness 3. Each desk weighs about 200 pounds and does 4 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon. The office chairs weigh 40 pounds and do 3 Damage. The filing cabinets weigh roughly a hundred and fifty pounds each and do 4 Damage.

**7: Grant-Writers' Office**
Three overworked grant-writers have their desks crammed into this room, along with as many research materials as they can pile onto their sagging shelves and into their overstuffed filing cabinets. Their job is to ask rich people and foundations for money. As it just so happens , that's Mr. Winthrop's particular area of expertise, do he spends a lot of time here directing their efforts. They all know him as a kind, good-hearted boss.

The desks are Toughness 3. Each weighs 180 pounds and does 4 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon. The office chairs weigh 40 pounds and do 3 Damage. Other items of furniture (the filing cabinets, for example) weigh roughly a hundred and fifty pounds each and do 4 Damage.

No one is likely to be working late here at the time the museum gets attacked. If any of the grant-writers were around, Mr. Winthrop would want them to work the crowd at the party. So in all likelihood the office is dark and silent.

**8: Wallace Krammit Fellowship Room**
The smallest, most cramped, ugly and claustrophobic office in the building—little more than a closet. It (barely) contains a desk, a filing cabinet, a bookshelf and an uncomfortable chair. No one quite knows what the office's sole occupant does.

Every year another intern shows up—a recipient of the Wallace Krammit Fellowship Award, and uses this room to study some incredibly esoteric subject. The next year another intern replaces them. The room and its contents were the Krammit Fellowship's gift to the museum, along with a small annual stipend to keep the program going, so no one questions it.

What exactly are the interns working on, year after year? No one is sure, but then no one has cared enough to ask any of them. The rest of the museum's staff either ignores the interns or treats them with hostile condescension. In any case they don't mingle with them.

The intern isn't here on the night of the party. If for some reason the PCs rifle through the office they will find no clue as to what the project is—the intern doesn't seem to have been doing any kind of work at all.

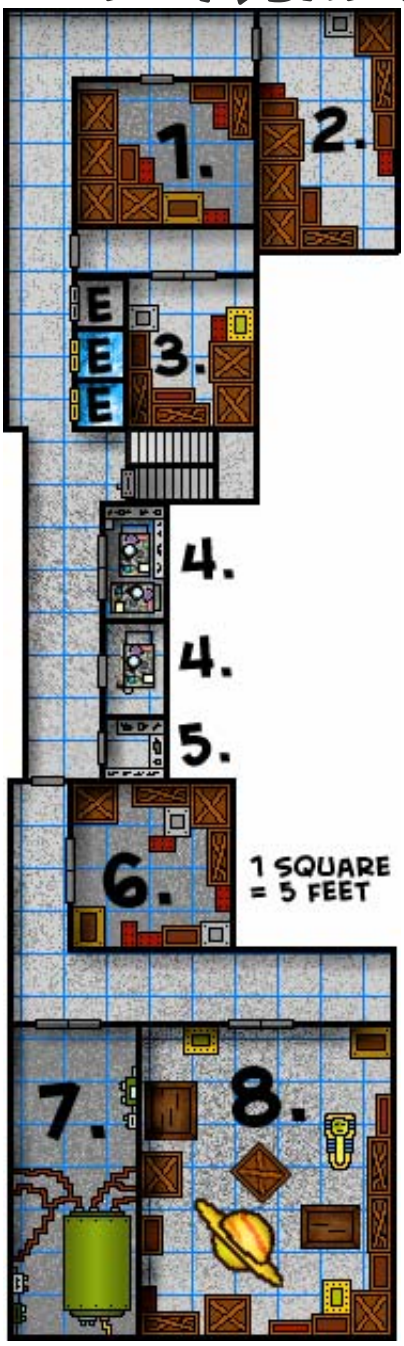
The desk is Toughness 3, weighs about 150 pounds (it's nearly empty) and does 3 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon.

The sole office chair weighs 30 pounds and will do 2 Damage.

The filing cabinet weighs 100 pounds (it too contains little) and does 3 Damage.

The shelves are flimsy, Toughness 2, weigh 150 pounds fully loaded and do 3 Damage. They will break into pieces on the first blow, if they are used against a target with 2 Toughness or more.

# MUSEUM BASEMENT




**1: Storage Room One, 2: Storage Room Two, 3: Storage Room Three, 4: Janitorial Closets, 5: Maintenance Supply Closet, 6: Storage Room Five, 7: Boiler Room, 8: Storage Room Four**

**The Basement**
It's unlikely that the PCs will come down here in the course of the adventure. Still, you never know—one could get knocked through the floor or down an elevator shaft.

Most of the basement is used for storage, although the boiler room and the janitorial closets are also down here.

**1: Storage Room One**
The biggest crates here weigh up to a thousand pounds and do up to 7 Damage if used as weapons. There are other crates that weigh only a few pounds and do none. You can find about anything in between.

Please remember though, before you start hitting people with crates, that the contents may be valuable or even irreplaceable. Most crates are Toughness 4, but some are considerably more fragile.

**2: Storage Room Two**
About equally divided between works of art on the left and fossils on the right, Mr. Winthrop has been making a valiant effort to keep this room organized and keep artifacts from getting lost (a chronic problem under his predecessor).

As in the other storerooms, the biggest crates here weigh as much as a thousand pounds and do up to 7 Damage. The lightest crates weigh just a few pounds and do 0 Damage. The crates are Toughness 0-4.

**3: Storage Room Three**
Another basement storage room. This one isn't very well organized or catalogued. The museum may in fact have no idea of that it has some of the items stored here. The biggest crates here weigh a thousand pounds and do 7 Damage. You can find anything smaller and lighter, all the way down to boxes that weigh barely anything and do no Damage.

**4: Janitorial Closets**
Each of these rooms contains either one or two janitorial carts and a host of cleaning supplies. While it's unlikely that the battle in the main display area would spill over into this part of the building, we'll list some basic combat statistics for the materials here, anyway—just in case.

The carts themselves are heavy—400 pounds at least, and do 4 Damage if you hit someone with them. A mop handle does 3 Damage if you use it like a quarterstaff. There are caustic cleaning supplies that you could use to cause 1 or 2 Damage to a target, or blind them (at the GM's option). Devious PCs might even find the makings of an improvised bomb in here, although we leave this up to the GM.

**5: Maintenance Supply Closet**
Normally kept locked, the door is Toughness 4. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick the lock (and a Check vs. DC 20 to do it without setting off the silent alarm). The custodial staff, the security staff and Mr. Winthrop have keys to this door. The assistant curators and administrative staff don't. Inside are shelves full of spare materials for maintenance and janitorial work. Bottles of cleaning fluid, extra rolls of toilet paper and so forth.

The shelves themselves are Toughness 2. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 18 to tear one loose from the wall. A shelf does 2 Damage if used as a weapon.

**6: Storage Room Five**
Yet another basement storage room. The biggest crates stored here weigh a thousand pounds and do 7 Damage. The smallest weigh effectively nothing and do none. Crates vary in Toughness from 0-8, depending on what they are made of (anything from cardboard to wood to riveted metal).

**7: Boiler Room**
The door to this room is always kept locked. Only the museum's custodial staff, Mr. Chatham, and Mr. Winthrop have the key. If you try to break in, you will find that the steel door is Toughness 8 and a Disable device Check vs. DC 20 is required to pick the lock (or DC 25 to do it without triggering a silent alarm in the Security Center).

The room inside is dark even when the lights are on. The floor is bare concrete and the ceiling is covered with exposed ductwork. The museum's boiler hunches here like a monster in the gloom. Toughness 6, it weighs four tons and does 10 Damage if you rip it loose and use it as a weapon. A maze of copper pipes radiates out from the boiler. The pipes are Toughness 5—a good-sized section of pipe should do 2 or 3 Damage if used as a club. Anyone who tears loose a length of pipe or rips holes in the boiler risks taking 3 Damage from scalding hot water.

**8: Storage Room Four**
The largest of the museum's storage rooms. They have long since lost all pretense of keeping things organized down here—the room holds any and all objects that are inconveniently large to fit elsewhere, all jumbled up together. A giant model of the planet Saturn, dinosaur bones, an Egyptian sarcophagus, huge sculptures of twisted metal and anything else that seems appropriate to the GM. Obviously we don't have the space here to list every last item (and anyway, you'd clobber us if we made you wade through a list like that). Assume that you can find big objects that weight up to two tons and do up to 9 Damage if used as weapons. Some items are fragile, with as little as 0 Toughness. Others (big modern art statues made out of steel, for example) may have a Toughness as high as 8. Most of the sealed crates are Toughness 5.

Nothing intrinsically dangerous (medieval weapons or 18th century cannons) is stored

here, and neither are any mystical artifacts. The one mummy present has been resting peacefully in his case for three thousand years and isn't about to wake up any time soon.

**NPCs for this Scene**

The Goth Squad themselves can be found in Appendix A ("The Villains"), on Pages 106 to 117. Their masked henchman are also listed in that Appendix, on Pages 120 to 125. Thaddeus Winthrop's stats are on Page 20, in Scene Two. This section provides stats and descriptions for the other NPCS the Player Characters are likely to encounter over the course of the evening.

**Mr. Roderick "Rod" Chatham**

**PL: 4**

**Str:** 16 (+3) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 4 **Attack Bonus**:4 **Defense:** 4
**Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 4 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Climb 3 (+6), Drive 2 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+6), Investigate 2 (+4), Knowledge (Art) 1 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) 6 (+8), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Security Chief) 4 (+6), Profession (Soldier) 5 (+7), Sense Motive 5 (+6)

**Feats:** Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment), Leadership

**Equipment:** Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage; Autofire)

**Complications:** Wants to protect the artifacts on display but wants to protect his friend, Mr. Winthrop, even more.

**Background:** Mr. Chatham is a veteran of the first Gulf War and approaches museum security like a military operation, barking out orders and speaking in Army jargon. Chatham is confident and cheerfully obscene. Like many soldiers, he inserts curse-words into nearly every sentence, with no particular anger or heat. If you are afraid that your PCs would be offended by hearing a constant stream of vulgarity, replace each swear-word with the word "bleep" as you speak—that makes it even funnier. Particularly when something he's saying turns into a whole string of bleeps.

It's particularly odd to hear him talk about art. As it happens, Mr. Chatham has always been interested in the arts, always wished he had time to study the subject. A job with museum security suits him just fine. However, while he is happy to get into an enthusiastic discussion of art, he keeps cursing a blue streak while he does it.

As noted above, Chatham is very fond of Mr. Winthrop and will try to keep anything from happening to him. He actually feels a little jealous of his friend and the fact that he's had a whole lifetime to study the arts. But he values their friendship a great deal.

Mr. Chatham's wife left him a couple of years ago and he doesn't like going home to his empty apartment. Playing endless games of chess with Mr. Winthrop is like therapy for him.

**Carrington Adam Hurst**

**PL: 4**

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
**Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 14 (+2)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
**Initiative:** 4 **Attack Bonus**:4 **Defense:** 4
**Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 4 **Willpower Save:** 4

**Skills:** Bluff 5 (+8), Diplomacy 5 (+8), Handle Animal 4 (+7), Intimidate 9 (+12), Investigate 2 (+4), Knowledge (Art) 1 (+3), Knowledge (Business) 9 (+11), Handle Animal 3 (+6), Knowledge (Civics) 6 (+8), Notice 4 (+6), Perform (Oratory) 5 (+8), Profession (Industrialist) 9 (+11), Ride 3 (+5), Sense Motive 5 (+7)
**Feats:** Benefit (Wealth), Connected, Contacts, Distract (linked to Intimidate), Leadership, Master Plan, Taunt
**Equipment:** Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
**Complications:** Can't stand to let anyone get the better of him, will protect his posessions (including his wife) to the death.

**Background:** The small-gasoline-engine king, Mr. Hurst has a virtual monopoly on the manufacture of lawn-mower and chainsaw engines in the United States. He likes to say that he started with nothing and worked his way to the top, and that anyone could do this if they weren't so lazy. In fact he inherited a fortune, but he did undeniably make it into a much bigger fortune through the sweat of his brow. He works very hard, all the time, protecting his money and making it bigger.

A hearty, loud, aggressive man, his brusque charm only thinly masks his angry, impatient, judgmental nature. He's intensely competitive and can't stand not to completely dominate any social situation in which he finds himself. Beware of getting cornered by him—he'll pick some opinion that he thinks you'll find offensive and hammer you with it until you give in.

He feels very strongly about the importance of the arts, although he doesn't have the time or patience for them himself. He feels that Western Civilization has to maintain the purity of its culture and that the way to do this is for him to fund things like opera and museums that display the Old Masters.

You can see from his tan and his muscles that he plays a lot of tennis. He also rows, jogs and does a lot of other physical exercise. He says it's good for the mind, but it's mostly good for his ego. He also hopes it may keep his young wife's gaze from straying for a little longer. He's a fairly good marksman and spends a lot of time on the pistol range, although his bad temper and lack of patience sometimes spoil his aim.

Mr. Hurst takes good care of his things, even though his work schedule never allows him to spend much time with them. Woe unto anyone who scratches his Bentley, leaves a mark on his lawn or makes his wife laugh.

He's constantly on the watch for any sign of infidelity on Dianna's part. He's not sure what he would do if he ever had cause to suspect her, but he's sure it wouldn't be pretty.

**Dianna Hurst**

**PL:** 1

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 15 (+2) **Wis:** 10 (+0)
**Cha:** 16 (+3)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 1 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Feats:** Attractive, Benefit (Wealth)
**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+5), Diplomacy 4 (+7), Handle Animal 3 (+6), Knowledge (Behavioral Science) 2 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 2 (+3), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+5), Notice 3 (+3), Perform (Musical Instrument) 4 (+7)

**Background:** A lot of trophy wives start cheating on their husbands at once. Not Dianna Hurst. She's completely in awe of her husband, totally dominated by his personal magnetism and his bullying. The first to defend him, she has even come to believe in his odd, elitist view of the world. Always pretty, but always shy, she was completely devoted to and dependant on her father until she went away to college. Then when she was twenty she took an internship at a charitable foundation in New York, where she met Adam Carrington Hurst—a bigger, better father. Her personality and willpower were never very strong, and he swept her off her feet with only feeble resistance.

Dianna's family dislikes Mr. Hurst intensely. They hate his politics, they don't like his swaggering style, but most of all they think it's inappropriate for their daughter to be involved with him. They both know how vulnerable and unworldly she is and they think he's taking advantage. Dianna wants them to be reconciled, but to her distress her husband has demanded that her parents apologize to him for their disapproval and has forbidden her to speak to them until they do. She obeys him, as she does in all things, even though some part of her can see how wrong this is.

**Gavin Kolchack**

**PL:** 7

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 16 (+3) **Int:** 16 (+3)
**Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 7
**Toughness Save:** 3 **Fortitude Save:** 7
**Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 7

**Skills:** Bluff 7 (+9), Diplomacy 6 (+8) Gather Information 12 (+14), Intimidate 3 (+5), Investigate 4 (+8), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 5 (+8), Knowledge (Civics) 5 (+8) Knowledge (Current Events) 6 (+9), Knowledge (History) 2 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 3 (+6), Notice 10 (+14), Profession (Journalist) 6 (+9), Search 5 (+9), Sense Motive 7 (+12), Stealth 5 (+6)

**Feats:** Beginner's Luck, Connected, Contacts, Improved Defense, Sneak Attack, Taunt
**Complications:** Grouchy, always seeks the truth, under a court order not to defame Theron Anton West

**Background:** This grizzled reporter has been investigating weird, unnatural events for the last ten years or so. He's not a typical "occult investigator". His style is extremely matter-of-fact, not at all sensationalistic. He never jumps to conclusions, always invites the reader to make up their own minds about the facts he is reporting—even when it's about Goat-Man or the Chupacabra. Nor has he spent his whole career as a journalist covering the supernatural. In fact he was in his forties by the time he learned such things existed. Gavin came from a working class family in East Chicago. His background still shows in the way he talks and he makes no effort to conceal it—he's proud of being a working guy.

He managed to get a scholarship to Harvard through hard work and talent. He met Theron Anton West there, and despised him at once. West was a spoiled, rich twelve-year-old. The youngest person ever admitted to Harvard, he was well on his way to getting multiple advanced degrees by the time Gavin met him. While it embarrasses him to admit it now, what really annoyed Gavin about Theron wasn't the boy's sneering arrogance. What Gavin couldn't stand was the fact that a rich kid was smarter than he was. This was entirely the wrong reason to hate Theron West, as he later came to learn.

Gavin never really wanted to be anything but a journalist, and he went on to get an advanced degree in the field from Columbia University. He never won any major awards, but he was steadily working his way up in the profession, working as a beat reporter for a series of big daily newspapers. Then, ten years ago, he mysteriously threw his hard-won success away. From that time onward, he has published nothing but stories about ghosts and monsters in trashy publications like the Chicago Daily Express.

Here's what really happened. While working in Chicago, he discovered a startling pattern to a series of murders on the Southeast Side, all of them in the vicinity of the stockyards. The killer clearly believed himself to be a werewolf.

The trail led him to a Russian immigrant named Leonid Popov, who took notice of the fact that a reporter was asking questions about him and lured Gavin down to the stockyards in the dead of night with a false lead. There the reporter was attacked by an enormous wolf, which he accidentally killed with a silver-plated steak knife. The next day, Popov's dead body was found in the stockyards.

No one but the tabloids would publish this article and after it came out, no one else would hire him. Fiercely committed to the truth and curious by nature, he delved deeper into the shadows. Once he knew where to look, there was evidence of the supernatural all around him.

Never again did he seek to confront monsters directly—one encounter like that was quite enough. Mostly he just reports on ab-natural evil, rather than fighting it. He might foil a creature's schemes, if he sees a way to do it, but he doesn't go around pounding stakes into anyone's heart. Guys get dead that way—or worse.

Time and again, his path has crossed Theron Anton West's. Gavin has come to realize that West is in all likelihood a sorcerer or possibly even a demon. However, the only time he tried to publish anything about his suspicions he got hit with a court injunction not to write anything further about Mr. West. He took this as a warning. While he's pretty brave, he'd be a fool not to fear the things Theron Anton

West can do. Getting sued would be trivial by comparison.

Sometimes Gavin wonders why he keeps running into phantoms and creatures of the night. Is he cursed? Does he have some weird destiny to fulfill? Is Theron West messing with him?

The sad truth is that it's none of these things. He just knows how to recognize the evils that are all around us. For it is only our blindness to the world's true nature that allows us to remain sane (although for Gavin Kolchack a bottle of scotch seems to work just as well).

**Hunk Manly**

**PL:** 5

**Str:** 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4)
**Con:** 18 (+4) **Int:** 12 (+1)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
**Initiative:** 4 **Attack Bonus**: 5 **Defense:** 5 (4 if caught flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 5 (4 if caught flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 5
**Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics 7 (+11), Bluff 6 (+10), Climb 8 (+11), Diplomacy 4 (+8), Intimidate 4 (+8), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 10 (+11), Notice 4 (+6), Pilot 3 (+8), Perform (Acting) 2 (+6), Profession (Actor) 9 (+13), Ride 6 (+10), Sense Motive 3 (+5), Survival 4 (+6), Swim 5 (+8)

**Feats:** Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Attractive, Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 1, Dodge Focus 1, Fascinate (linked to Perform), Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Improved Trip
**Complications:** Glory hound. Desperate not to ever let anyone know he's deaf.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (Deaf; can't make Notice Checks based on hearing)
**Background:** Host of the show "American Daredevil." He's been a performer since he was three and knows no other life. Hunk has been trained to trust his producers and to do whatever they say. They have done well by him, in turn, making him first a popular singer, then an action-movie star. The only time he ever tried to do something on his own (his rap album "Infinite Bad") it was a disaster. So now he has learned to amble through his life and do as he is told.

There are rumors that he has some kind of dark and terrible secret, too awful to be revealed. Because of his physique, the amazing stunts he performs and his mysterious air, a lot of people think he must be a superhero. Or gay. But he's neither. In fact, he's deaf. Hunk's hearing is worse than 98% of the population, near total deafness. He reads lips fairly well, but if he thinks he might have misread you, he simply won't respond to what you said, and will either respond with some totally unrelated remark, or stand there in eerie silence with a knowing smile on his lips. This annoying habit adds to his air of mystery. Girls find it irresistible.

When the Goth Squad attacks the museum, Hunk will be unable to resist trying to grab some glory for himself. He's not dumb enough to attack a supervillain, but he'll try to subdue the nearest henchman. With any luck, he could turn a brief mention in the society pages into a major headline. Or he could turn himself into a corpse. Either way it will do wonders for his career. His agent would approve.

**Dr. Edward Pennington—Vampire Hunter?**

**PL:** 7

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3)
**Con:** 16 (+3) **Int:** 18 (+4)
**Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
**Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7
**Toughness Save:** 3 **Fortitude Save:** 7
**Reflexes Save:** 7 **Willpower Save:** 7

**Skills:** Bluff 5 (+8), Concentration 10 (+15), Diplomacy 7 (+10), Disable Device 1 (+5), Escape Artist 4 (+7), Gather Information 8 (+11), Intimidate 5 (+8), Investigate 10 (+14), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 10 (+14), Knowledge (Art) 1 (+5), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+7), Knowledge (History) 2 (+6), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 8 (+12), Languages (German, Italian), Medicine 8 (+13), Notice 10 (+14), Profession (Doctor) 10 (+14), Search 6 (+11), Sense Motive 7 (+12), Sleight-of-Hand 4 (+7), Stealth 7 (+10)
**Feats:** All-Out Attack, Connected, Contacts, Critical Strike, Defensive Attack, Favored Opponent 5 (Vampires), Jack of All Trades, Second Chance (failed willpower rolls vs. magical effects), Sidekick 7 (Miss Ping-Ping, devoted aide-de-camp), Skill Mastery (Investigate, Knowledge [Arcane Lore], Medicine, Profession [Doctor])
**Powers:** Device (Holy Symbol; PL 7 Force Field, usable only against Vampires), Mind Shield 7
**Equipment:** Doctor's bag, containing medical gear, long sharp (Damage 3) knife for amputating heads and an endless supply of Damage 4 wooden stakes.
**Complications:** Loner, never gets close to anyone. Obsessively hunts vampires.

**Background:** Unlike Hunk Manly, Dr. Pennington doesn't cultivate an air of mystery. It just seems to gather around him by itself. On the inside he's deeply lonely.

When his wife died for the first time, he didn't stop crying for three days. She had already betrayed him, already fallen totally under the sway of the sinister Count Grunwald, but somehow that just made it worse.

Dr. Pennington was a practicing MD in those days. He treated rich people from Central Park West for the most part. That was his world and he was comfortable with it. He barely left Manhattan Island for years at a time, apart from occasional trips to the Hamptons.

Then after a lot of effort his wife managed to get a meeting with the reclusive and mysterious Count Siegfried von Grunwald, in hopes of getting him to support the Metropolitan Opera. The arts didn't interest him, but she did. Particularly her blood. Soon she was obsessed with the count, consorting with him openly, while her sad, shy, overworked husband suffered in silence and tried to bury himself in his work. If he had known what was really going on, he would have tried to save her, but he didn't, and tried to ignore it, and she died.

As a skilled medical practitioner, Dr. Pennington could tell that the weird wasting anemia which claimed his wife had no reasonable scientific explanation, although the bite marks on her throat suggested some other possibilities.

After sitting in his penthouse apartment for three days of endless, uncontrollable weeping, Dr. Pennington abruptly packed an overnight bag and left Manhattan. He wandered the earth, learning everything he could about vampires. Along the way he met a young woman named Ping-Ping, who shared his obsession, so he hired her as his only domestic staff and the keeper of his secrets.

He has never taken Ping-Ping with him on his vampire-hunting expeditions. In fact he never takes anyone with him. He has sworn never to let another human being die for his crusade. For this reason he will not ally himself with the PCs. He's pretty sure Ping-Ping has become infatuated with him (and she has) but he wouldn't date an employee—that would be wrong. In any case his heart belongs to his dead wife.

After he had walked the secret places of the world for a few years, and killed two vampires, he felt ready for Count Grunwald and returned to New York. He did not anticipate that the Count would send his dead wife out to kill him.

The second time she died, he killed her himself. It hurt even worse than her first death, yet he shed not a single tear. He killed Count Grunwald shortly thereafter and was arrested for the crime. A hung jury gave him a mistrial and the city declined to mount a second prosecution. He was free.

Today he continues his war against the darkness with obsessive zeal. It is all he has left. He has no superhuman powers--he isn't even particularly athletic, but he's patient and clever and he knows the weaknesses of his enemy. He would never directly confront a vampire at night—he kills them in their sleep. If he encounters one after dark it is because they have sought him out. But if they do, he knows how to hold them at bay until the dawn.

In person he is very dry, very enigmatic and detached. Partly this is his Old Money New York upbringing, partly it is his personality, but mostly it's that he's deeply traumatized and can't get close to anyone anymore

**Harvey Klieg**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 8 (-1)
**Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** -1

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+.), Drive 1 (+2), Intimidate 1 (+1), Knowledge (Art) 1 (+3), Knowledge (Business) 3 (+5), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+5), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 1 (+3), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+5), Knowledge (Tactics) 1 (+3), Notice 1 (+0), Profession (Financial Advisor) 4 (+6), Sense Motive 1 (+0), Stealth 1 (+2)
**Feats:** Benefit (Wealth), Connected

**Background:** A yuppie with a weak chin and a goatee, Harvey thinks he's clever and can't resist the opportunity to show everyone how smart and special he is, even if it puts his life and theirs in danger. He won't cooperate with anything a superhero tells him to do and will instead tell them why they're doing this all wrong.

He'll comment on the kinds of guns the robbers are using and why they could have chosen better ones for this kind of job. If you tell him to get on the floor he'll explain why he thinks it isn't actually safer to get on the floor, statistically speaking.

He's a rising young executive, born to wealth and he thinks a great deal of himself. He's not a bad guy, not cruel or sadistic, but he's a pompous, self-absorbed oaf and no one has ever seriously challenged him before. If someone tries to intimidate him, even if it's for his own good, he will get right in their face and start yelling at them. Nothing seriously bad has ever happened to

him and he's incapable of realizing that it might.

If he gets seriously injured he will sink to his knees, smiling with bewilderment and quietly explaining the nature of his injuries.

**The Caterer**
Lurking in the Fink Room (see Page 31), imperiously lording it over his staff, is Achmed al-Wazir, the chief caterer. He may or may not become involved in the fight, but he's in a position to lock the doors to the Fink Room from the inside and no one but Mr. Chatham and Mr. Winthrop have the keys. This could complicate matters when guests start trying to flee.

**Achmed "Lorenzo" al-Wazir**
**PL:** 1

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 10 (+0)
**Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 1 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Bluff 5 (+7), Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (Business) 3 (+5), Languages (English, Spanish, Arabic), Notice 6 (+6), Profession (Caterer) 5 (+7), Sense Motive 5 (+2), Stealth 1 (+2)
**Feats:** Connected

**Background:** He never uses his full name, and instead goes by "Lorenzo" in all his business dealings. "No last name is required," he proudly says, "it is like Cher."

Nobody seems to know what country "Lorenzo" comes from. He could be Spanish or Greek or Italian, with his black hair and olive complexion (in fact he's Egyptian). His accent is strong, but hard to place. He has a wicked looking scar, which he got in an accident on the school bus in third grade.

An imperious, domineering boss, he tolerates nothing less than perfection from his staff and is known for shouting a lot. With clients he acts flamboyant, confident and a little eccentric. It's mostly an act. He wants people to remember him.

"Lorenzo" is in a bad mood tonight, yelling and bullying and micromanaging his workers. That's because he's terrified. This is the biggest and most prestigious catering job he's ever taken on—he could barely believe he bluffed his way into it. Lots of serious society people are out there, all of them demanding and quick to spot problems. This moment could make or break him. And of course he couldn't use disposable plates or tableware for a reception like this, so he has sunk far too much money into renting silver and fine china for the evening. If it gets damaged, he could actually wind up taking a loss on the event. He is perhaps the only man in the city so wrapped up in his own business that he hasn't noticed the weird events going on. He's dreading the disaster that he's sure will come, but he has no idea just how disastrous it will be.

Bold with words, Lorenzo is no hero and has no desire to get mixed up in a physical fight with armed psychopaths. But he will try to help guests take shelter in the Fink Room, where he is coordinating the party. He may or may not think to lock the doors of the room, once a few guests have taken shelter there, which might actually make things worse for anyone else who is trying to flee the carnage.

**Generic Party Guest**

**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0)
**Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+2), Diplomacy 3 (+3), Drive 1 (+2), Knowledge (Art) 2 (+2), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (any) 4 (+4), Sense Motive 1 (+1), Stealth 1 (+2)
**Feats:** Benefit (Wealth), Connected

**Background:** Here's a generic innocent bystander, ready to scream, run around pointlessly, or threaten to sue the heroes rescuing them, as the GM sees fit.

**Generic Guard**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**:3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Climb 2 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (Art) 2 (+2), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Security Guard) 4 (+4)
**Feats:** Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage) or Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage; Autofire)
**Background:** Mr. Chatham's men will fight bravely, but they're totally overmatched. Without the PCs help, quite a few of them are sure to die.

**Individual Guards**
We've included stats and background information for some individual guards below, in case the PCs get a chance to know any of them.

**Grover Townsend**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 14 (+2)
**Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 3 **Reflexes Save:** 3
**Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Diplomacy 5 (+6), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 3 (+4), Knowledge (Art) 3 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+6), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Security Guard) 6 (+9), Sense Motive 6 (+7)
**Feats:** Equipment 1 (5 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)

**Background:** A fatherly, kindhearted old African-American gent, Grover Townsend is sixty-five and eight months from retirement. In a story like this one, you know that means he's liable to get killed. How ironic!

Grover had a checkered past—he ran with a street gang back in the sixties and did some stuff he's not too proud of. He joined the Marines in the hopes of giving his life some focus, but all he got was a one-way ticket to Viet Nam. While he was on patrol in Da Nang he defied an order that he thought

was immoral (he doesn't like to talk about this) and wound up dishonorably discharged after a year in the brig. It wasn't easy getting a job after that. He lifted boxes at a warehouse, worked as a longshoreman for a while. The security gig at the museum was the best job he'd ever had and he's hung onto it for decades. While he's not an educated guy, he's smart and wise and takes great pleasure in looking at the art on the walls, day after day. The museum is his refuge, the place he has at last found peace. He only wishes he had the chance to study art more, to learn what it all means. Maybe he'll get to in his retirement. Heh.

Grover recognizes a kindred spirit in Leopold N'Kwana, the quiet young African immigrant who has recently joined the security team. He's guessed that the boy is an illegal immigrant, that he barely speaks English and that he nurses some deep secret hurt. He's taken the boy under his wing and does his best to keep him out of trouble. That's going to be tough tonight.

Grover shaves his head and has a white handlebar moustache. Calm and diplomatic by nature, he speaks slowly and gently and never seems to loose his cool. A lifetime of working out has given him hard muscles even in his sixties, and although it's been years since he's handled an assualt rifle, it all comes back to him quickly. He's scared half out of his wits tonight, although he tries not to let it show. His soldier's instincts are still keen and he thinks he smells violence on the wind. He's right.

**Roy Biggs**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 16 (+3) **Dex:** 10 (+0)
**Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 2 **Attack Bonus**:3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 2
**Fortitude Save:** 3 **Reflexes Save:** 0
**Willpower Save:** 2

**Skills:** Climb 2 (+5), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 6 (+7), Knowledge (Civics) 2 (+2), Knowledge (Streetwise) 3 (+3), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (Cop) 3 (+3), Profession (Security Guard) 4 (+4)
**Feats:** Chokehold, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage; Autofire)

**Background:** Roy's a cop, as he tells everyone he meets. This gig is just a part time deal, to help pay the bills. He's no sissy rent-a-cop. Roy doesn't mention the fact that he's been suspended from the force for being too fat. And for losing his temper with too many suspects. And for scrawling racist graffitti on a Hispanic officer's locker. And for discharging his weapon while drunk. A great big beefy bear of a guy, Roy talks too loud and constantly chews gum when he isn't eating. He's a huge man and would be even stronger if he weren't lugging so much extra weight around.

He doesn't like African-Americans but he knows to shut up about it at work. Still, that Townsend guy really burns him up—talking like he's some kind of somebody. Staring at the art like he knows what it f&*^in' means. Roy knows what it means—nothing. Art's just a load of crap that fairies thought up so they wouldn't have to work. So's science.

Roy hasn't been with the team for long and he hasn't yet been caught drunk on the job. But like most alchoholics, it's just a matter of time before he screws up badly.

He's stone cold sober tonight, and uncharacteristically quiet. He can see that Townsend is scared and for some reason this rattles him. Usually nothing shakes that guy. Despite his lack of loyalty to anyone or anything, Roy will fight bravely when the violence breaks out. He does this out of spite—he doesn't want Townsend to show him up.

**Leopold N'Kwana**
**PL:** 4

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3)
**Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 12 (+1)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 4 **Defense:** 4
**Toughness Save:** 4 (1 if caught flatfooted)
**Fortitude Save:** 3 **Reflexes Save:** 4
**Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Bluff 5 (+5), Climb 3 (+4), Handle Animal 6 (+6), Intimidate 4 (+4), Knowledge (Art) 1 (+1), Knowledge (Tactics) 5 (+6), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 6 (+8), Profession (Security Guard) 2 (+3), Profession (Guerilla Fighter) 9 (+10), Stealth 6 (+9), Survival 7 (+9)
**Feats:** Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw, Sneak Attack, Startle, Track
**Equipment:** Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage; Autofire)

**Background:** Leopold's one great fear is that someone will discover that he barely speaks any English. If they find that out, they'll be a step closer to figuring out that he's in the US illegally and that puts him one step closer to getting shipped back to West Africa. And that of course would mean his death.

He was part of a ragtag guerrilla army since the age of eight, living off the land and stalking the enemy through the bush. Most of the kids he served with died, but he was crafty and stealthy and good at hiding.

At around the time he turned twenty, the war ended and the armies came in from the wilderness. Then former guerillas started disappearing, turning up dead in the river and in the trunks of cars. He decided to seek safer lands overseas. First he got to Spain, then France, then America.

He lives in a house with a bunch of other illegal immigrants and he's tried a few different jobs. He enjoys being a guard most of all. Looking at the art on the walls all day, feeling it soothe his injured soul.

He's just starting to relax, to at last feel safe, when the Wicked comes crashing through the ceiling.

Leopold is very fond of Grover Townsend and will use all of his half-forgotten skills as a bush-fighter to protect him. He's going to need everything he has tonight.

# Scene 4: Into the Night

**Summary:** The Frightmobile roars down the road, smashing anything in its way. After a block or so, a black fog engulfs it, and the vehicle disappears from sight.

**The Chase:** The heroes may attempt to pursue the Frightmobile. It's heavily armored and makes a difficult target.

Complicating matters, a crowd has gathered on the edge of the street, drawn by word of a superhero battle at the museum. Be careful not to hit the bystanders!
As the hearse-like vehicle barrels down the road, it releases a cloud of techno-magical razor bats to engage the heroes. While the PCs fight through the bats, Mr. Mandrake, riding in the hearse, will open a dimensional portal inside the black mist. The Frightmobile will then disappear, reappearing at Mr. Mandrake's ancestral country home.

The whole scenario can get disrupted if Mr. Mandrake and his minions get caught or killed here, so the GM should take no chances. Have the cloud of mist appear *before* any of the PCs can reach the speeding vehicle. Some PCs will figure out ways to defeat you anyway. If they do, you're going to have two options to keep the adventure going. Either Mr. Mandrake gets away (perhaps he breaks out of custody if they've already caught him) and assembles a new team (see the extra villains in Appendix B on Pages 128-135) intent on stealing back the Heart of Set, or Mr. Mandrake gets away and the PCs go track him down. Either add an extra scene or cut straight to Scene 10, "All Hell Breaks Loose."

**The Frightmobile**

**Strength:** 40 **Speed:** 6 **Defense:** 9
**Toughness:** 12
**Offensive Powers:** Razor Bats (Effect: Blast 5 [Extras: Cone-Shaped Area Effect, Linked to Obscure 10]), Cobweb Projector (Effect: Snare 9)
**Defensive Powers**: 8 Impervious Defense, Provides Immunity to Cold, Heat and Suffocation to anyone inside.
**Movement Powers:** Super-Movement (Wall-Crawling—the Frightmobile can drive straight up or down the wall)

**GM's Option: The Groupie**

Among the gawking bystanders, right at the front, is a startlingly beautiful superhero groupie named Nora Fleeber. You can find out more about her (including her stat-block) on page 94. The PCs probably won't meet her, yet. But she's pretty enough that they're likely to remember her, even though they glimpsed her in a crowd. (Note for the GM: Nora and her troubles are meant as an optional sub-plot. You don't have to use her at all. See her description for more details).

**Aftermath:** The exhibit hall is in a shambles. Unless the PCs were somehow able to prevent it, several guests were trampled to death as panic swept through the room. Depending on the actions of the players, the henchmen either get away or gun down their hostages before being neutralized by the player characters. The front of the museum is awash with blood, the handiwork of Killarina.

A frantic Mr. Winthrop (if alive) will urgently plead for the heroes to retrieve the Heart of Set. He's sure something terrible is going to happen if it isn't returned. He's right.

**Role Playing Notes:**

1) Mr. Winthrop is desperate to have the Heart returned.

2) Mr. Chatham will organize any of the surviving security guards and reestablish a security perimeter.

3) Carrington Hurst is furious at both the heroes and museum security for failing to protect the guests (whether they did a good job or not).

4) One of the guests will ask aloud "Why did the Goth Squad bother to kidnap that obnoxious little Gavin Kolchack person?" (only if the players miss this important clue).

5) More city police and the coroner's office will arrive.

6) The police will question everyone, including the heroes.

# Scene 5: The Mystery

**Summary:** The player characters must uncover clues as to the whereabouts of the Goth Squad.

**The Search:** The players should want to investigate as much information as possible about the Heart of Set. Astute players will want to track down the connection between Gavin Kolchack and the Goth Squad. Heroes may want to question guests of the previous festivities. In particular, why were Carrington Hurst and Hunk Manly in attendance at the unveiling?

Questioning Doctor Edward Pennington should be a priority for the heroes. His occult knowledge could be invaluable to the mystery at hand.

Depending on the skill or ingenuity of the information gatherers, a number of facts may be uncovered.

1) If the PCs try to locate someone who might know something about the Heart of Set, with a Gather Information Check vs. DC 15 they will learn that the bookstore, Road to Shambhala, has the most complete occult collection of arcane tomes in one hundred miles.

2) If they contact the Daily Express, a Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate or Performance (Oratory) Check vs. DC 20 will uncover the fact that Gavin Kolchack and Theron Anton West went to college together. The paper's staff will *not* reveal what was in the article that so gravely upset Theron West. If a PC has some kind of weird power to control minds over the phone, then the person they are talking to doesn't know the answer. The editor who Mr. Kolchack worked under at the time has since moved on to another job. In Hong Kong.

3) If the PCs question Doctor Edward Pennington as to why a vampire hunter would attend the exhibit, he will answer freely, whether they succeed at a skill check or not. He is in the city tracking a vampire and had hoped that it would show up at the exhibit. It didn't. Plenty of other terrible things did, but not a vampire. He's disappointed, he dryly remarks.

If the PCs ask him to join forces with them, he will politely point out that he has never claimed to be a vampire hunter, and he certainly does not hunt sea-monsters, ballerinas or mental defectives in devil-masks.

If they ask him about the Heart of Set, he replies that he isn't really an expert on artifacts like that. To make matters worse, most of the people who do study that field are all so hopelessly evil that you would have a hard time getting a straight answer out of any of them. He does however know of an old scholar named James Durzic who specializes in this kind of occult research, and is a decent sort. Dr. Pennington isn't sure why, but there are a few people who are capable of studying the blackest side of magic without ever feeling even slightly tempted by its wiles. Good old Mr. Durzic is one of them. He owns a bookstore here in

town. It's called "the Road to Shambhala" or something equally tasteless.

4) Hunk Manly was in town and attended just to be in the limelight. He sure does love attention.

5) Carrington Hurst was considering giving the museum a generous grant; of course this is out of the question now. He's never had to put up with such indignity! He also goes back on any offers he made to fund the PCs' team.

6) Questioning the police about the guests will show that Gavin Kolchack has been arrested for trespassing on numerous occasions. He has broken into deserted houses on occasion, he was once caught in the Chicago Field Museum after hours with what the arresting officer described as a "wild look" on his face. He was even once arrested locally, sneaking around Theron Anton West's property.

**Interrogating the Captives**

Policemen are swarming all over the museum by the time the PCs get back. Unless the PCs have some sort of police powers themselves, it will be very difficult for them to get to interrogate the captives themselves. Nonetheless, some enterprising PCs will no doubt find a way, whether it's transporting a thug off to a pocket dimension or disguising themselves as police detectives.

Alternatively, a PC who has a contact in the city government, or who has the feat "Connected" might be able to talk the authorities into letting them observe the official police interrogations. Call this a Bluff, Diplomacy or Performance (Oratory) Skill Check vs. DC 20.

Here's what each of the different captives knows and what they are willing to say when captured (assuming they've been caught).

**The Henchmen**

You can find stats and individual descriptions for them in Appendix A ("The Villains") on Pages 120-125.

Mr. Mandrake doesn't tell his low-level henchmen very much. None of them are occultists—they're all professional criminals who were hired to help the team steal jewels. Nor do they feel much loyalty to their employer. Offer them any kind of deal and they'll probably talk.

Most of the henchmen were hired at a crummy outdoor café in Brussels. It's a notorious place, where criminals and mercenary soldiers skulk around waiting for supervillains to hire them. A fixer they know only as "Filthy Pierre" approached each of them and asked if they'd be up for a series of jewelry heists. They were all desperate enough to say yes, so Filthy Pierre gave each of them an envelope with a passport, some money and a plane ticket.

They've been staying at crummy motels in the area. Every few days Rathbone shows up in the Frightmobile at each of their motels and they all go off to rob another jewelry store. Sometimes other members of the Goth Squad come along and sometimes not. Rathbone is great—a real soldier who knows his tactics. Plus he doesn't care if you go nuts on civilians.

The henchmen have all seen the Wicked, Grimson, Badmoon and Killarina before, but they don't know where any of the Goth Squad actually live. They've got the impression that the Squad itself works for someone bigger (Rathbone mentioned "the Boss" once), but they have no idea who that might be. The Devil, maybe?

**Cryptic**

It's hard to hold Cryptic if he gets captured. He won't stop trying to escape or attack his captors until he is physically incapacitated. If the PCs have some way to read his mind while he is unconscious, despite his mental

defenses, or while he is fighting, they can learn what he knows. He will not speak aloud under any circumstances. In fact he can't.

Cryptic spends much of him time in a diffuse state, lurking beneath the threshold of mankind's collective fears. He was conjured into full manifestation by a sorcerer of hideous power, who called himself "Mr. Mandrake". While Cryptic resents being imposed on this way, the things he's been asked to do in Mr. Mandrake's service have been satisfying enough. He's aware of Mr. Mandrake's plans for the Heart of Set, including the role Gavin Kolchack is expected to play, but he would have a hard time articulating what he knows without words.

**Grimson**
While he doesn't feel a lot of loyalty to Mr. Mandrake, Grimson knows to fear the man's anger, so he's determined to reveal as little as possible to his interrogators.

Because Grimson's conscious self knows and understands a lot more about Mr. Mandrake's plans than his brutish, subhuman self, he will do his best to submerge himself in his bestial state.

As a monster, Grimson can recognize his teammates and Theron West's estate, he knows that he is supposed to help retrieve the big black shiny thing. Yet he can't really describe it very well. While he can, for example, visualize Mr. Mandrake's house, he can't tell you the address.

When he has access to his full intellect, Grimson knows the location of the estate and he knows that the boss wants the Heart of Set to use in some sort of awful ritual. He doesn't know what the ritual is supposed to do, but based on his experience with arch-villains, it's probably something that will either give him a lot of personal power or wreak horrific vengeance on his enemies. A human sacrifice is required for the ceremony. Grimson doesn't know why it has to be Gavin Kolchack, and feels a little curious about this.

He does not know Mr. Mandrake's real name.

When interrogated, Grimson's demeanor will depend on which state he is in. If he's a beast, he'll pant and grunt and look around wildly. His behavior is unpredictable. He won't willingly answer any questions and he's prone to suddenly lashing out for no obvious reason.

If he has his wits about him, he is cold, distant and sardonic. He's polite, but says that he would prefer not to answer any questions without his lawyer present. If anyone asks him how to get in touch with his lawyer, he says "That may be difficult. I've already eaten him."

If some clever PC points out that this means his lawyer is already present, Grimson loudly farts and says "Not anymore. That was the last little bit of lawyer left in me, I fear."

**Killarina**
Totally uncooperative if captured, she plays with her fingers and makes weird, disconnected statements that have nothing to do with the questions she is asked. ("God is a blood-lovely spatter of broken glass and sorrow. My uncle said so once. He lives in the trees.")

In any case she doesn't have very much information. She would recognize Mr. Mandrake's estate if she saw it, she knows the names and powers of her teammates and has some vague idea that their plan involves using the Heart of Set in some sort of big scary ritual. But she doesn't really care and paid no attention to the details. Mr. Mandrake brought her onto the team by offering her the chance to meet a lot of interesting people and kill them in a lot of interesting ways. She lives for death, and

for dance, and nothing else makes much impression on her.

If she is locked in an interrogation room with ordinary, non-super-powered detectives, they may suddenly discover that *they* are locked in the room with *her*, rather than the other way around. She doesn't care if she lives or dies and would find it very amusing to kill one or more of her interrogators, whether or not the other cops gun her down afterwards.

**Theron Anton West, aka Mr. Mandrake**

If Mr. Mandrake has been captured, something has gone seriously wrong with the scenario. While he knows all about the Goth Squad's sinister schemes (having thought everything up himself) his mental defenses are probably too strong for the PCs to get through. He will claim that the Goth Squad kidnapped *him* as well as trying to snatch his old college acquaintance Gavin Kolchack. Mr. West says that he is delighted that the PCs have rescued him and that he'll gladly tell them (or the police) what little he knows.

He had decided to attend the exhibit after all—in fact he had some idea about trying to reconcile with Gavin. While he was walking up the street, the Frightmobile appeared from a cloud of mist and Rathbone snarled at him from the driver's seat to "get in the #$%^& car."

He doesn't know what they wanted from him, but if they intended to steal the Heart of Set, he supposes they might have been trying to get his advice on how to use it. Not that he knows, or would share such dangerous information if he had it.

Mr. West's formidable lawyer will arrive at this moment and ask if he can escort Mr. West home after he has been looked over by the paramedics. The police (if he is actually in police custody) will agree to let him go.

**Rathbone**

He really shouldn't get captured yet. But if he does, he will try to freak out his interrogators, talking loudly and gleefully about horrible atrocities he's seen and/or committed on the battlefield. He laughs a lot, too—high and crazy.

Rathbone is willing to share a little of what he knows, in hopes of covering up the rest. He was recruited in Brussels by "Filthy Pierre." His assignment has been to organize and lead a squad to go grab as many flawless jewels as possible. His boss calls himself "Mister Mandrake," which is so stupid (in Rathbone's opinion) that it might actually be his real name. The Frightmobile was provided by Mr. Mandrake, who seems to have magical powers. Here he pauses and says to his interrogator: "You're going to die soon. I can tell, sometimes." He laughs his freaky laugh. In addition to the things he is willing to say, he also knows the location of Mr. Mandrake's estate, the powers and background of the rest of the team, and the details of the upcoming ritual. It will be much tougher to get any of this out of him.

And no, he doesn't really have the power to tell whether or not anyone is about to die—he was just messing with them.

**The Wicked**

"I'm the devil." He begins, "I hope you understand that. You can do what you want to me, but remember that in the afterlife, you're mine. Can I have my face back?"

After this unpromising beginning, the rest of the session goes much the same way. The Wicked is more than willing to talk, but only about his crazy obsessions. As the interrogation proceeds, he gets more and more agitated and asks repeatedly to have his face (his devil mask) back. If the interrogators actually give him his mask he calms down, but still refuses to answer their questions with anything except his lunatic pseudo-religious drivel.

If they probe his mind or otherwise extract information from him unwillingly, they may find that he knows the names and abilities of his teammates, the rough location (but not the precise address) of Mr. Mandrake's estate, and the vague outline of their plan. He doesn't know what the big ceremony is supposed to accomplish, but he's sure it must be something really bad. He does not know Mr. Mandrake's real name.

The Wicked is perfectly aware of how wrong everything they're doing is. Sometimes he cries himself to sleep thinking about it. That's why he has to continue, though. Because it's so wrong. He is the devil and he has come to the devil's work.

The Wicked may eventually turn out to be the key to the whole adventure. If they run out of leads, a prison psychiatrist may suddenly get through to him and get him to talk. Perhaps a PC could even give it a try. If they gave him back his mask, they have a chance of reaching him.

For every 45 minute session they spend with him, let them try for a Profession (Psychologist) or Diplomacy Check vs. DC 25. They can try once per day. If they succeed on the check for three sessions in a row, the Wicked opens up to them and tells them his whole story. He also tells them everything he knows about Mr. Mandrake and the location of his estate. He may actually be on the way to making a recovery now. It's a shame that he's already a multiple murderer and that the authorities will never, ever let him go.

**Getting to the Next Scene**

All roads lead to Shambhala. As noted above in Scene Two, on Page 59, if the PCs make any inquiries about the Heart of Set or where to begin an occult investigation, their research immediately points them to James Durzic and his bookstore, the Road to Shambhala.

**Read to the Players:** The Road to Shambhala is located in a rundown area. It stands by itself in its own separate building, surrounded by vacant lots and empty concrete slabs on all sides. It looks as though it was once part of a strip-mall, but the rest of the structure got torn down.

The building has all sorts of mystic symbols hanging on the windows and painted in silver on the door. Anyone who enters the shop will encounter the proprietor, James van Durzic, a German who came to the States ten years ago. Books of all shapes and sizes take up a large portion of the room. Magic paraphernalia takes up the rest of the space. It is amazingly cluttered and everything seems to be arranged with no rhyme or reason. PCs who have the ability to sense magic will feel it all around them. Yet Mr. Durzic is no sorcerer himself. He studies the black arts out of curiosity and because he feels it's important for someone who isn't crazy or evil to know about these matters. He has never felt even slightly tempted to cast the smallest spell.

Some PCs, as we found in playtesting, will insist on trying to bully or threaten the information out of him. Some of them will even want to beat him up. If they choose to physically intimidate him, there's not much he can do about it. He's frail and doesn't know any spells. But he's also a stubborn old guy, and if he thinks the PCs are evil he'll try his best to keep the information from them. It takes an Intimidation Check vs. DC 30 to force him to talk.

Of course, you may not feel like rewarding your PCs for terrorizing a helpless old man. If you don't want them to get away with it, have Mr. Durzic suffer a heart attack and die while they are interrogating them. Don't disrupt the plot by having him expire before he can tell them the critical information, but make it look as though there may have been something more—something crucial.

Or, if you don't like the idea of them pushing Mr. Durzic around, but you don't want to pull anything quite that heavy on them, have Mr. Mandrake's thugs attack the store before the PCs have a chance to seriously threaten or harm him.

**Role Playing Notes:**
1) Mr. Durzic speaks with a heavy German accent.

2) He is a little suspicious of the heroes' motives.

3) It will take some serious persuasion to reveal anything he knows about the Heart of Set. A Diplomacy Check vs. DC 30 would do it, as would a Bluff Check vs. DC 30 or a Knowledge (Arcane Lore) Check vs. DC 25

4) Attempting to bribe Mr. Durzic will insult him. He'll stay polite but he'll ask them to leave.

5) Characters with considerable occult knowledge will impress Mr. Durzic and he will cooperate without hesitation. See #3.

**NPCs for This Scene**
Just like in Scene Two ("Invitation"), there's really only one NPC for this scene, and not much to do except to interact with them. Here he is. Meet James Durzic, occult scholar and small business owner.

**James Van Durzic**

**PL:** 6

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0)
**Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 18 (+4)
**Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0 **Defense:** 0
**Toughness Save:** 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
**Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 10

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+5), Concentration 11 (+16), Diplomacy 8 (+10) Gather Information 8 (+10), Investigate 2 (+7), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 11 (+15), Knowledge (Art) 3 (+7) Knowledge (History) 8 (+12), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 9 (+13), Languages (Aramaic, Chinese, English, German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Sanskrit, Saxon, Tibetan) Notice 9 (+14), Profession (Bookstore Owner) 2 (+6), Profession (Scholar of the Occult) 10 (+14), Search 3 (+8), Sense Motive 3 (+8)
**Feats:** Connected, Contacts, Fearless, Well-Informed
**Complications:** Frustrated by people who think he's an old hippie.

**Background:** When Mr. Durzic chose the name "The Road to Shambhala" he had no idea that it meant anything countercultural (he'd never even heard the song). Durzic meant the name as a serious statement about the soul's rise to the realm of the Enlightened Masters through study. It annoys and confuses him that people keep thinking it must be a head shop.

A serious scholar, Mr. Durzic is grave, humorless and a little pedantic. But he's also one of the most stable, well-adjusted and fundamentally good people the PCs are ever likely to encounter. A lot of students of the occult get seduced by the promises of power and secret wisdom. Mr. Durzic, on the other hand, is totally immune to the allure of the dark side.

He has dedicated his whole life to studying the occult—he has never married and has no children, everything else in his life is secondary to his researches. Yet unlike most obsessive scholars, he has done this for completely altruistic reasons.

As a student at the venerable University of Heidelberg, he became aware of the existence of the hidden world. In light of the fact that unseen forces were real, he felt obliged to curtail his other studies and devote himself to pursuing the mysteries of the occult. If magic exists, it must be important and yet almost no one seemed to be studying it in any systematic way. Therefore it was clearly his duty to do so.

As he explored deeper, he found to his distress that the forces of darkness were real too, and even worse, no one properly understood them. Scholars of black magic all went insane or became hopelessly evil. Reluctantly, he was forced to accept that this was the field he needed to devote himself to. It was just too dangerous to leave these things unknown. After all, how can you protect people from forces that you don't properly understand?

He has spent far less time than he would like exploring the higher truths and far too much mucking around in the darkness. Yet he soldiers on, mind and soul intact—because somebody has to.

Most people would find his life terribly lonely, but he accepts it with good grace, the way he accepts everything. He loves people, in a detached, abstract kind of way, but the only living thing he is really close to is his cat.

# Scene 6: Unexpected Company

**Summary:** As Mr. Durzic begins to talk about the Heart of Set (or just as the PCs fail to get him to reveal what he knows Mr. Mandrake's masked henchmen attack.

**Interruption:** As James van Durzic pulls out a very old leather bound tome, and prepares to show the PCs what is inside, a group of Mr. Mandrake's henchmen will attack. They will strike by surprise unless the players take active measures to avoid a sneak attack. The henchmen open fire from several buildings across the street, then cross the street, discharge more rounds into the shop and then break in through the shattered windows. Their mission is to kill Mr. Durzic and destroy the book.

**Combat Tactics:** There are two henchmen for every PC present. While they advance across the street, the henchmen will maintain a fifteen-foot distance between each man (to keep from all getting taken out by an area attack). They will use automatic weapons and grenades to assault the Road to Shambhala from a distance, pumping as much firepower as possible into the store before they actually try to enter it. Half of them will enter through the windows, the other half will try to cover them from the street.

If more than fifty percent of the attackers are neutralized, they will scatter in all directions and lay low.

# THE ROAD TO SHAMBHALA

**1: Main Sales Area, 2: Office, 3: Storeroom, 4: Restroom**

**1: The Main Sales Area**
A large, irregularly-shaped room full of bookshelves. A counter with a very old cash register (it still has a "No Sale" button!) stands at the south end, in front of a door that leads to the rear office.

The shelves under the bay windows are fairly short—three feet tall or so. The rest of the bookcases are more than six feet tall and block the view of the front door. The ones along the walls are so tall that you have to reach the top shelves with a rolling ladder, which slides around a track on the ceiling. The interior smells of old books and paper, with a faint hint of pipe tobacco.

Mr. Durzic, the proprietor, is often behind the counter, reading. Just as often he's in the back, or out straightening the volumes on his overcrowded shelves.

Unlike a lot of occult bookstores, this one stocks very few paperbacks and almost no new age literature. It's more the kind of place you'd go to find some crumbling leather-bound tome on Theosophy, or a first edition of Alistair Crowley's "The Book of Lies."

The books are organized by category, but the categories have names like "Scorpio" or "The Hierophant" and only seem to make sense to Mr. Durzic. He knows instantly where you can find a given book. There are also odd curios here and there on the shelves. Jars of mummy dust and monkey's paws on strings, polished horns of nameless beasts and yet less savory things. Especially valuable books and more expensive objects are kept locked in the counter.

The bay windows are only Toughness 1. There are metal shutters you can fold down over them, which increase this to Toughness 4, but you have to do this from the outside, it takes a full round and a Reflexes Check vs. DC 15. The PCs are unlikely to get a chance to do it during a firefight.

The smallest bookshelves are Toughness 3, weigh 150 pounds fully loaded with books and do 3 Damage. They aren't large enough for a Medium sized character to take cover behind without crouching. They're all up against the front windows anyway, which would make that impractical.

The shelves in the middle of the room are Toughness 3, weigh 600 pounds when full and do 4 Damage if used as weapons. They are as tall as an average human being, and up to three Medium sized characters can take cover behind one without crouching.

The large bookshelves against the wall are Toughness 3. They each weigh 800 pounds and do 4 Damage when full.

It seems likely that one or more bookshelf will get tipped over during the fight. It takes a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 to get out

of the way of a toppling set of shelves. Getting pinned under one of the bigger shelves (the ones in the middle of the rooms or against the walls) does 2 Damage.

There are no massively powerful magic items on display in this room, although there are materials that a PC Ritualist or Artificier could probably make use of (at the GM's discretion).

**The Office**

Mr. Durzic's office is as cluttered as Thaddeus Winthrop's. Here is where he does all the endless work that a small businessman must do. His job and his researches don't even leave him time for a pet goldfish.

A large desk, overflowing with papers, takes up much of the space. There are also filing cabinets, and bookshelves full of ledgers and binders. These bookshelves are relatively flimsy. Toughness 2, they weigh about 600 pounds each (60 pounds empty) and do 4 Damage. Only one person can hide behind the desk. A bookshelf provides cover for up to two people if it's pushed away from the wall. Mr. Durzic's overloaded desk is Toughness 3, weighs 700 pounds (with all the papers inside) and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon. His rolling office chair is Toughness 3, weighs 40 pounds and does 2 Damage. The filing cabinets are Toughness 4, weigh 200 pounds (like the desk, they're very full) and do 3 Damage.

The office's front door is Toughness 3 and is usually left unlocked. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to force the lock and a Disable Device Check vs. Dc 15 to pick it. The rear door leads outside, and it's stronger. Toughness 4, it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock. There is a steel shutter you can close over the door (it takes a round and a Reflexes Save vs. DC 10 to do this) which increases the door's Toughness to 8.

There are two windows in this room, but they are both so narrow that it would take a Reflexes Check vs. DC 15 for a Medium sized character to wriggle through one, and they are covered with Toughness 6 metal bars.

**The Storeroom**

Filled with cardboard crates of books and magazines, with a chair and a small rickety table (used mostly to examine invoices and bills of shipping). This room smells strongly of pipe tobacco. It might or might not be a good place to take refuge during the battle

The individual crates are only Toughness 1, but boxes of books make surprisingly good ballistic shields—give them Toughness 5 vs. any bullets that come whizzing through the walls. The door to the room is pretty flimsy. Toughness 3, you can force the lock open with a Strength Check vs. DC 15 or pick it with a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15. The heaviest crates weigh up to 60 pounds and do up to 2 Damage if you bash somebody with them. The table is Toughness 2, weighs 40 pounds and does 2 Damage, if it doesn't just break apart the first time you hit somebody with it. The chair is Toughness 2, weighs 15 pounds and does 1 Damage.

There's a window, but it's not a good escape route. It's so small that you would need to make a Reflexes Check vs. DC 15 to squeeze through it even if it weren't covered in Toughness 6 bars.

Scrounging around in this room won't reveal any powerful mystical artifacts—although at the GM's discretion a PC with the Feats Ritualist or Artificier might be able to find some ingredients they can use.

**Restroom**

Officially this room is for employees only, but Mr. Durzic is softhearted enough that he lets anyone use it who asks him politely—even the local homeless people.

The toilet is Toughness 2. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to tear it loose from the floor. It does 3 Damage if swung like a club. The sinks are Toughness 3, and a Strength Check vs. DC 20 can rip one loose. It does 2 Damage if used as a weapon.

**If the PCs Lose:** The PCs are unlikely to lose the battle outright. The opposition is just a team of PL 3 thugs, after all. However, if they fail to protect Mr. Durzic, they will have effectively lost the fight.

And now they will have a real problem on their hands. What does their mysterious enemy intend to do with the Heart of Set? Let's hope they have some means of contacting the dead!

If they do, Mr. Durzic's ghost will do his best to help. Even if the PCs didn't manage to convince him to help them while he was alive, he can see that they did their best to protect him and that their intentions were good. Unless of course they tried to intimidate him, in which case he refuses to even speak with them.

If Mr. Durzic dies and the PCs have no means of reaching him in the beyond, make sure the PCs saw which book he was taking off the shelf. Perhaps he's even clutching it in his cold, dead hands. The book is long and hard to understand, but with a little work (or perhaps a visit to Dr. Edward Pennington) they can get the information they need.

In the unlikely event that the thugs win the battle and incapacitate all the PCs, they won't bother to execute any of them. Nor will they take any of them prisoner. The assault team's mission was simply to kill Mr. Durzic and destroy the book. The PCs will wake up in the ruins of the shop, with Mr. Durzic's corpse staring at the sky. Perhaps he managed to grab a piece of one of the book's pages before he died, with some crucial information on it. It may still be clutched in his hand.

**If the PCs Win:** If Mr. Durzic survives he will put all his doubts about the PCs aside. They saved his life, after all. What better proof could he have of their good intentions?

He informs the heroes that the Heart of Set is an old and terrible thing. It was made long before the first block of stone for the first Egyptian tomb was laid. It was dreaded in Atlantis and worshipped in Lemuria.

It is death, and it draws death. The Heart is not a living, thinking force of evil. Instead it stores, absorbs and magnifies the power of death. Ghosts, the walking dead and nameless things from beyond the astral void are drawn to it. For most human beings it is a worthless thing to own. Worse than worthless, for the sinister negative energies it emanates will rot it's owner's mind with entropy and erode their flesh with sickness. But a necromancer might be able to use it, if they were strong enough.

It is theoretically possible to make the Heart of Set rip the dead out of their graves and compel them into an awful semblance of life. Many necromancers have figured out how to make zombies, over the years, but this would make a *lot* of them, and it would keep spontaneously generating new ones, with no end in sight.

Only an experienced sorcerer could impose his will on the Heart to direct its undead thralls. In fact it would have to be someone hideously strong, obscenely powerful.

And there is something worse. The book speaks of a gruesome secret ritual that can unleash the Heart's untold centuries of accumulated power in a single horrific eruption, transferring it into the wielder. Of course that should kill them. But if they were strong enough to master the power of

the Heart in the first place, it might not. Rather than simply killing them, it might make them something worse than dead. A god? An anti-god? Whatever name you prefer, it's clearly something that ought not to be.

The ritual would take a long time to cast. It would have to be performed in a place that is open to the sky. Autumn would be the ideal season. Some big festival in autumn (Halloween for example) would be best of all. You would need five flawless gems, arranged in a star around the Heart of Set. Although the array of jewels might be fairly small, the ceremony itself would take a lot of space, at least as much as a tennis court, and would probably involve drawing a big diagram on the ground. It would require a human sacrifice and the victim would have to be someone the caster either really truly loves or really, truly hates.

Durzic would recommend using at least three people to perform the ritual, and feels that five would be safer. However, if you can't find a sacrifice that all five of them deeply love or hate, you could have a single person perform the whole thing. They would have to be really powerful and really smart to have any chance of making it work.

Distracting the caster in the middle of the ritual might disrupt it completely, but then again it might just cause a minor setback and require a little extra time to fix. Making off with the jewels or the sacrifice would certainly wreck the ceremony.

If you run out of other options, then killing the ceremonial victim before the ritual is complete might also disrupt things, but then again it might not, particularly if the sorcerer casting it is very powerful.

How many of the five jewels do the Goth Squad presently have? Do they already have a sacrifice lined up?

All-in-all, this situation looks really bad. The city is clearly in peril.

**NPCs for This Scene**

For the sake of convenience, we've duplicated the stats for the "Generic Thug" from Page 120, just so you don't have to go flipping back through the book to find them. We've also included a separate listing for the strike-team's leader, Konstantin Orloff, who is tougher than most of his men, but frankly isn't a very good field-commander.

**James Van Durzic**

See his stat-block at the end of the last scene, on Page 59.

**Generic Thug**

**PL:** 3

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Climb 2 (+4), Disable Device 4 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Criminal) 4 (+4), Stealth 2 (+3)
**Feats:** Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire) or Rocket Launcher

**Konstantin Orloff**

**PL:** 6

**Str:** 17 (+3) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 6 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
**Toughness Save:** 6 (+2 flatfooted, without Body Armor)
**Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
**Willpower Save:** 6

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+6), Intimidate 3 (+5), Knowledge (Tactics) 2 (+3), Languages (Russian, English, French), Notice 8 (+11),

Profession (Soldier) 2 (+3), Stealth 3 (+5), Survival 6 (+6)
**Feats:** Accurate Attack, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4**,** Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Pin, Sneak Attack, Track
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage; Extra: Autofire)

**Background:** A giant Russian with a craggy, weatherbeaten face and muscles like bowling balls on his arms, Orloff is a former Spetnatz commando who got kicked out of the unit for things he'd rather not talk about (in fact he got low marks on one too many annual Fitness Reports, because of his laziness and poor discipline). He worked for some Moscow gangsters for a while, but he didn't have the right family connections to get a really good job in organized crime, so he signed on with a supervillain to help steal some fissionable material from a reactor outside Islamabad. It went pretty well, so he joined up for a second job, through Filthy Pierre.

Mr. Mandrake put him in charge of this operation because he's big and fearsome and used to be Spetnatz. This is the first time he's ever had to command anyone and he's completely out of his depth. He's trying hard to conceal the fact that he has no idea what he is doing and will confidently give orders without having any idea whether or not it's going to get his men killed.

He's much too worried about whether or not he's going to screw up the mission to have any time left over for moral qualms or ethical considerations. Not especially sadistic, he'll do absolutely anything if he thinks it will save the mission and/or his own hide.

If you met him while he's not on the job, you'd find him to be quiet, slothful and not interested in much apart from playing chess, drinking vodka and chasing girls. He has no idea what to say to girls, but his giant muscles and masculine appearance sometimes make talking unnecessary.

As a chess player, he's surprisingly focused and disciplined—completely unlike every other area of his life.

# SCENE 7: NEWS FLASH

**Summary:** News reports reveal a rash of violated graves and strange sightings across the city.

"Graves across the city have been disturbed in large numbers. The City Health Department has also confirmed that considerable numbers of bodies are missing from the morgue. An official has been quoted as saying that 'they seem to have just got up and walked out of the facility.' No confirmation yet on the disturbing rumor that the violated graves were not exhumed, and instead were somehow dug out from the inside. Stay tuned to this station as the story unfolds. This is Karen Montoya reporting. Now we'd like to ask our viewers to observe a brief moment of silence for the Channel Seven news crew who vanished last night on assignment in the park…Wherever you are, Super-Seven Action News Team, our prayers are with you. And now it's over to Chet with a report on the slash-tacular new adventure-comedy *Hot Slots*."

**Note:** If the characters did not catch Ms. Montoya's report on television, then headlines in the daily paper should be just as effective at getting the heroes' attention. If all else fails, have them overhear conversations on the street about these macabre events. Depending on the skill or ingenuity of the information gatherers, a number of facts may be uncovered.

**Role Playing Notes:**

1. Dread hangs over the city. Everyone the PCs speak to looks afraid.
2. No one wants to be outside at night. As evening descends, people hurry to get off the street. Normally bustling thoroughfares are now deserted after dark. There are a few cars and even scattered pedestrians here and there. But for the most part the whole town is eerily still.
3. There don't seem to be nearly enough police cars on the street, either. In fact a whole lot of cops have called in sick or just skipped work altogether.
4. Reports come in from all across town of shambling figures in the dark. Things that lurch and stumble. While there were already scattered reports of sightings like this (see Scene 1) now there are a whole lot more of them. Police have

received dozens of calls from panicked citizens.

5. There have been more sightings in the city park (pick one from your campaign city, or use the one included with Scene 8, on Pages 71-73) than the rest of the city combined.

6. A local TV news camera crew (from "Your Action News on Channel Super-Seven") disappeared in the park last night. They didn't have time to transmit or record anything. No trace of their camera equipment has been found, although their van was legally parked by a meter across the street (apparently this was the only place where they could find a spot). Karen Montoya urges viewers to pray for their safe return.

7. There has been more howling in the park. It now seems to be heard there more often than anywhere else. And it's not just after midnight, anymore. Now it can happen any time after the sun goes down.

8. The Daily Express is offering a reward for the safe return of Gavin Kolchack.

**What's Really Going On**

Mr. Mandrake has the Heart of Set in his loathly clutches and he's using it to raise an army of the walking dead (but we're sure you already guessed that). He's not yet ready for the big ritual—he's still testing the Eye and getting used to it. Raising an army of zombie slaves was always part of the plan—and it's fun, too, so he thought he'd start out with that.

The newly awakened dead are shambling toward his estate, there to await his orders. However, before they reach him, they aren't yet completely under his compulsion and they can easily get sidetracked. A shiny object in a store window, a person who reminds them of somebody they don't like or even the fresh hot brains in a passerby's head can all distract them from their goal. This makes it hard to follow them back to Mr. Mandrake. They are almost certain to wind up doing something that forces the PCs to destroy them before they make it all the way to the Heart of Set.

**Getting to the Next Scene:** Scene Seven is meant to be a brief interlude, allowing the PCs to gather more information and make up their minds on how to proceed.

Based on the information James Durzic has given them (see Pages 64-65), they may well assume that Mr. Mandrake intends to conduct his obscene rite in the park—it's a big place, open to the sky and it seems to be a center of activity for supernatural evil.

If they get this impression, they'll probably want to stake the park out by themselves. Move straight to the next scene. It is not necessary for the city authorities to get them involved. You could even have them go past the park on their way somewhere else and hear howling and screams. No PC group could resist something like that.

If the PCs haven't thought of going to the park on their own, or if they seem to be floundering around, unsure what to do next, have the city authorities or Channel Seven News get in touch and ask them to investigate. If any of the PCs has a contact in the press or the city government (including the police, of course) then their contact asks them to check it out. But don't feel compelled to railroad them down the pre-prepared plot arc. If they would rather go stake out jewelry stores, then go straight to Scene Nine ("Diamonds are a Megalomaniac's Best Friend," Pages 79-95). Let them check out the park later, or avoid it altogether.

If they just want to go confront Theron Anton West at his estate and they have some way of finding it, perhaps you should let them. Perhaps on their way they hear a police call about innocent people getting attacked in the park or a robbery in progress at Gellman Brothers' Jewelry. Then again, perhaps not.

# SCENE EIGHT: BAD MOON RISING

**Summary:** The city police request that the heroes stake out the city park this evening and uncover what is going on there. What's with the zombies? The howling?

**Getting the Scene Started:** Perhaps the Player Characters have decided to come here on their own initiative. Perhaps a contact in the city government or a tearful staffer from Your Super-Seven has begged them to come. Perhaps they were just passing by when they heard howls and screams, or they overheard a police dispatcher frantically trying to get the city's terrified patrol officers to respond. If you really want to twist their arms, perhaps someone they know was a member of the missing news team (sometimes Players resent being manipulated that way, so only use that trick if you think you can get away with it).

**The Stakeout:** The heroes will start to hear howling deep in the park around dusk. There is a lot of tree cover and at first it's hard to tell precisely where the sound is coming from—it seems to emanate from several directions at once.

Heroes with the powers Accurate Hearing, Acute Hearing or Extended Hearing should make a Notice Check vs. DC 15. If they make it, they can tell that a group of eight-to-ten four-legged creatures is moving in on their position from the north while a lone humanoid figure advances toward them from the south. Whatever is closing in on them from the south, it's big, quiet and fast.

The northern group is composed of wolves, two for each player character. Badmoon himself advances on them from the south, running at super-human speed. This may not have been the best time to encounter him—he's had a difficult day at work. Earlier this afternoon, Mr. Mandrake yelled at him in front of his teammates, for something that wasn't really his fault. Badmoon is in a frenzy and will attack like a rabid wolf. He's got some job-related tension to get out of his system.

**Combat Tactics:** Badmoon will bounce from one adversary to another, slashing to kill. Although he's frenzied, his combat computer will adjust his tactics during combat to use his abilities to the best advantage.

As he warms to the combat he calms down a little and may crack a joke or two. He may even do his famous impression of Goofy at some point.

If he sees a female superhero in a red cape or hood, he won't be able to resist saying something like "Hey Little Red Riding Hood, watcha got in the basket?"

There aren't really any wolves—Badmoon is using his holographic projector to create an illusion, in hopes of distracting the PCs and confusing their tactics. Characters with Tracking Scent or Accurate or Acute Smell will notice that the "wolves" don't smell like anything with a Notice Check vs. a mere DC 10.

A PC with superhuman vision (any type but Darkvision) or Blindsight also has a chance of detecting the fact that the wolves aren't real. It's harder to do this by sight than it is by smell. The PC has to be intentionally looking for visual abnormalities and they have to make a Notice Check vs. DC 25

The PCs won't necessarily detect that the wolves aren't real when they attack them. The holograms have been programmed to look injured when struck. Only a successful melee attack automatically reveals that a wolf isn't solid. It takes a Notice Check vs. DC 25 to realize that ranged attacks pass through them. After all, if you shoot a real wolf, there is no reason why the projectile wouldn't come out the other side and hit something else.

Badmoon will continue to generate images throughout the battle to distract and confuse his opponents. He will fight until he starts to lose. He then will attempt to flee.

**Role Playing Notes:**

1. Badmoon is a bit stir crazy from having to stay at Mr. Mandrake's estate. He sneaks out to have a bit of fun without the knowledge of his associates. He would be really embarrassed if they found out.

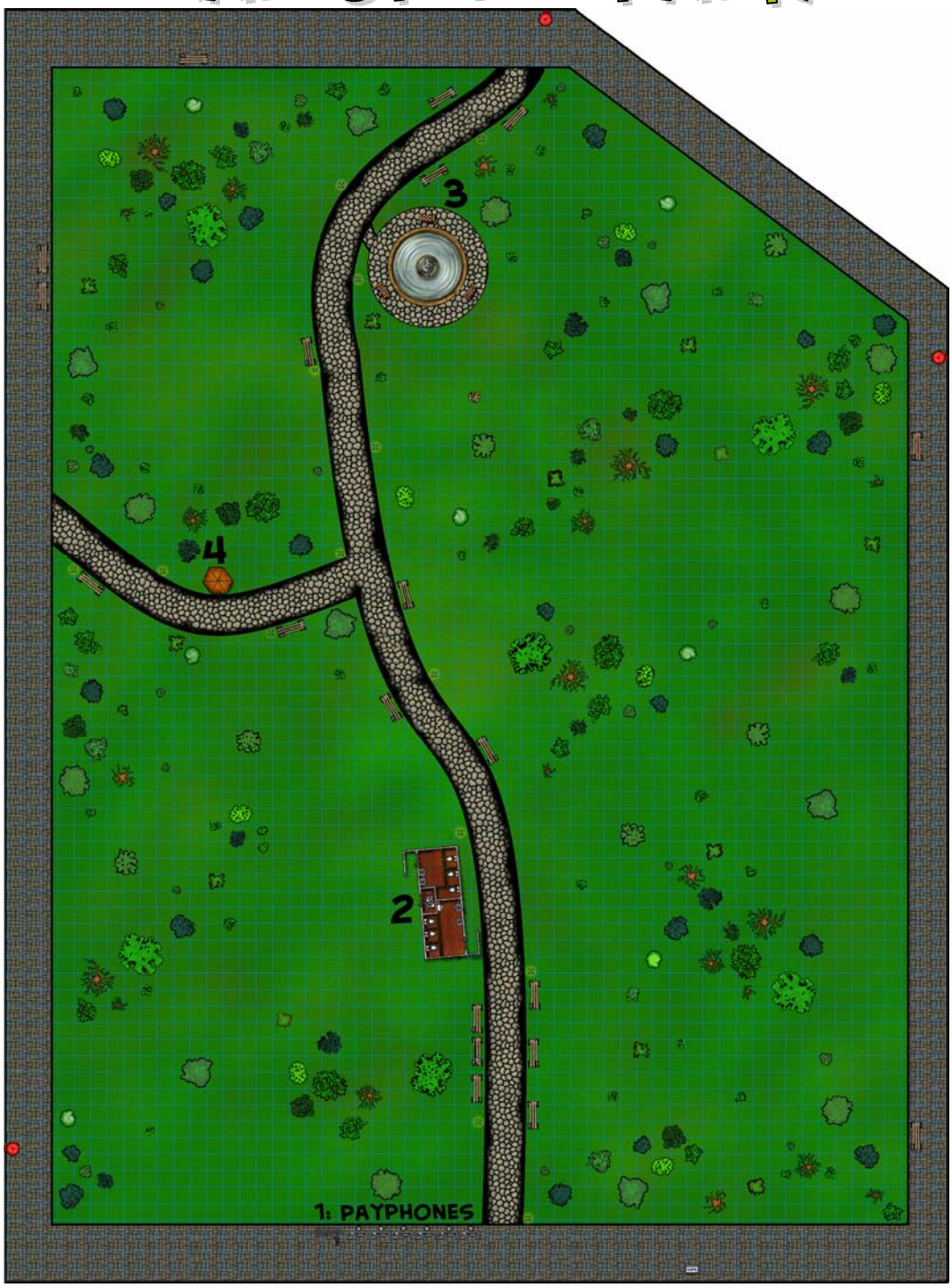
2. Despite the fear that grips the city, a pair of lovers has decided to rendezvous in the park. We have stats and background information for them on Pages 74-75. If you want to complicate the battle with a hostage situation, Badmoon may decide that one or the other of them would make a good meal. He'll try to grab the one he likes and hightail it to a secluded location for a quick snack. This could result in a mad chase through the park. If it does, Badmoon will try to use his holographic projector to blend into the foliage and throw the heroes off his trail.

3. We have some other NPCs who Badmoon and his wolves could menace, in addition to the luckless couple necking on the park bench.

4. The sounds of battle will attract a group of zombies on their way to the Heart of Set. The zombies will engage everyone in their way. PCs, innocent bystanders, Badmoon, the holographic wolves, sleeping pigeons, etc. It is possible to follow the zombies back to the Heart of Set, although all sorts of distractions will cause the zombies to get into a lot of trouble before they ever reach Mr. Mandrake's estate, and may force the PCs to destroy them before they reach their destination.

STRANGE MAGIC

# MAP OF THE PARK




**1: Payphones, 2: Restrooms, 3: Fountain, 4: Gazebo**

**The Park**
There are small decorative streetlights along the trails, but otherwise it's surprisingly dark for the middle of the city. Benches sit here and there along the path. They may or may not hold a snoozing homeless person (they've been avoiding the park these past few nights unless they absolutely have nowhere else to go).

The lights are relatively flimsy. Each one is Toughness 4, weighs 150 pounds and does 3 Damage if used as a weapon.

Made of wood, concrete and metal, each park bench is Toughness 4, weighs 500 pounds and does 4 Damage.

The trees are all different sizes and shapes. To simplify things enough to make them manageable, assume that a small tree is Toughness 2, weighs 150 pounds and does 3 Damage if wielded as a club.

A middle-sized tree is Toughness 3, weighs 1,000 pounds and does 5 Damage.

A big old tree is Toughness 3, weighs a ton or so, and does 7 Damage.

Different trees have different amounts of reach, depending on their height. Here the GM should improvise the details.

**1: Phone Booths**
A row of six phone booths stands here, next to a bike rack. Only one of the six phones still works. A single rusting bicycle frame is chained to the rack (it's been there for a year).

The pay phones themselves are Toughness 3, but the posts they are attached to are Toughness 8 and weigh 100 pounds. If you break one off and use it as a weapon, it does 4 Damage.

The bike rack is Toughness 8 and weighs 300 pounds. It does 4 Damage if used as a weapon.

The bike-frame attached to it is only Toughness 2, but if you tear it loose the jagged metal tubing makes a vicious weapon—it does 3 Damage.

**2: Restrooms**
This small brick building houses public restrooms. It's kept locked more often then not, to the dismay of the homeless people who live in the park, and it's always locked at night. The walls are Toughness 5, and the doors are Toughness 4. At this hour they're padlocked and chained.

The chains are Toughness 7 and the locks are Toughness 4. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the locks. The heavy chains do 3 Damage if you use them like flails. The windows are only Toughness 1, but they're so small that a Medium sized character needs to make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 to wriggle through them.

Inside are a few toilets, sinks and (in the Men's Room) urinals. The toilets are Toughness 3, weigh about 40 pounds each and do 2 Damage if used as weapons. The urinals have the same stats. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 25 to rip a toilet or a urinal loose. Sinks are Toughness 4, weigh about 30 pounds and do 3 Damage if wielded as weapons. It take a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to rip a sink off the wall. The light switches don't work—the Department of Parks turns the power off at night.

Stall partitions are Toughness 2 and take a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to yank off the wall. The Men's Room stalls don't have any doors, but the doors in the Women's' Room are Toughness 2 and require a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to break off. Doors and stall partitions both do 3 Damage if used as weapons.

**3: The Fountain**
Some shabby, battered-up chess tables sit around a fountain. The fountain itself hasn't been able to produce more than a sluggish gurgle of water for some time, and it's switched off now anyway.

The concrete rim of the fountain is Toughness 5 and it's high enough for a Medium sized character to take cover behind, if they crouch.

The water in the fountain is only about two feet deep. Of course, you could still drown someone in it if you held their head down. You could also catch some nasty diseases in there, from the looks of it.

The concrete statue in the middle of the fountain is Toughness 5, weighs 1,500 pounds and does 8 Damage if used as a weapon.

The chess tables are too small to effectively take cover behind. Each one is made of Toughness 7 metal, weighs 180 pounds, and does 3 Damage.

**4: The Gazebo**
Made of Toughness 3 wood, covered with decades worth of graffiti, this little structure has served as a wedding chapel for more than one couple over the years. And as a toilet by more than one derelict, to judge from the smell.

A set of short wooden steps leads up to the Gazebo on either side. Inside you can find a picnic table, and still more graffiti.

The picnic table is chained to the floor (the chain is Toughness 6). Toughness 3, the table weighs 250 pounds and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon.

The edge of the Gazebo is about waist height. A Medium sized character can take cover there if they crouch.

Six beams hold up the roof. Each beam is Toughness 3, weighs 300 pounds and does 4 Damage if a super-strong character snaps it off and uses it as a club. Break off more than two of them and the roof will collapse in 1-5 rounds, doing 3 Damage to anyone caught underneath.

**If the PCs Win:** The likeliest outcome of this scenario is that they drive Badmoon away from the park. They may lose track of him, or they may be able to trace movements for a while. Unless they've planted some kind of tracking device on him, it will be tough to follow him through the city streets. It's far from ideal country to track somebody across and he knows just how to trick or lose his pursuers.

If the PCs have planted a tracking device on him, he finds it, and puts it on a stray cat. This should lead the PCs on an interesting chase.

If the PCs actually capture Badmoon, they find him to be a congenial guest, cooperative and friendly—if perhaps a little frightening.

As mentioned above, he's peeved with his boss at the moment, and he's willing to roll over on him. He knows the rough outline of Mr. Mandrake's plan. He also knows that it requires six flawless jewels to complete, that one of them turned out to be useless and that Rathbone is planning one last robbery to find a replacement. He even knows the time and place. Badmoon will gladly tell the PCs where Mr. Mandrake lives, if he thinks he can gain something from it. However, if you don't want to go straight to Scene Ten, he gives them someone else's address—probably Carrington Adam Hurst's, in Pennsylvania. Mr. Hurst will not be at all pleased to have the Player Characters burst in on him. There is nothing in his estate to indicate that he takes any kind of interest in the occult.

**If the PCs Lose:** It's not very likely that the PCs will get defeated outright. If they do, then you can pull the following deus-ex-machina to keep them from getting eaten.

Although there aren't very many cops on the street tonight, the altercation in the park is too much to ignore, and the PCs can hear the sounds of many sirens converging on their location. This alarms Badmoon. He wouldn't have any difficulty killing his way through a few dozen cops, but he can't afford to get on the news—that's why he ate that camera crew last night. If Mr. Mandrake discovers that he's been sneaking out, he'll take steps to prevent it, and that's sure to spoil all his fun. So instead of taking the time to kill and eat the PCs (or for that matter just to eat them alive) he bites the face off of whatever innocent bystander they were trying to protect, waggles his finger reprovingly at the downed heroes and leaps off into the night.

**Getting to the Next Scene:** This depends on how the battle went and where you want the PCs to go next. If they chase Badmoon back to Mr. Mandrake's house you can go straight to Scene 10. If he left them beat-up and bleeding in the park, then the next day they find out about the robbery at Gellman Brothers while it's in progress and you can jump right into Scene 9. In either case, it's best to leave the PCs with a cliffhanger for the next session. If they didn't manage to track Badmoon down, ask them what plans they make to investigate further (or rest and recover) the next day, then hit them with the news of the robbery and end the session. If they have tracked Badmoon back to Hell House, end with them standing in front of the gate.

### Innocent Bystanders

Any number of different people could be in the park when Badmoon runs amok. Here is a generic innocent bystander and some individual personalities. The GM isn't obliged to use any of the characters listed below. They are here purely as a convenience.

### The Doomed Lovers

Here they are—Heloise Stickley and her boyfriend Norbert "Norby" Baldridge. Neither one's parents likes the other and they both still live at home, so they have to go make out in the park. It's more fun now than it ever has been before—the danger makes it really exciting. This may actually save their fading relationship if it doesn't get them killed.

### Heloise Stickley

**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+4), Diplomacy 3 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+5), Notice 2 (+2), Sense Motive 2 (+2), Stealth 1 (+1)

**Background:** A curvy, dark-haired stoner girl, her voice is low and mellow when she isn't screaming. Heloise hasn't really figured out what she wants to do now that she's out of high school, apart from getting drunk and getting more tattoos. She tried a few Community College courses but they were boring. She's had a few crappy jobs but they were boring too. So for now she's crashing with the parents and her two little sisters. They're all on her case a lot, so she spends as much time as she can hanging out with friends. Most of them went away to college this fall, unfortunately, but she still has her long-term boyfriend, Norby, to fall back on. Except her parents hate him and his parents hate her and neither one is allowed in the other one's house. She doesn't really like Norby much herself, but he's what she's got. Anyway his probation officer is cute—maybe she can hook up with him? Her parents say that Norby's going to get her into trouble. They're right.

**Norbert "Norby" Baldridge**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+2), Craft (Mechanical) 2 (+2), Diplomacy 2 (+2), Disable Device 2 (+2), Drive 2 (+2), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Notice 2 (+2), Sense Motive 1 (+1), Stealth 2 (+2)

**Background:** Norby is going to be something important. A drummer or a bassist or a mercenary or maybe a hit man. He has lots of plans and he'll get busy on one of them just as soon as he can find the time. In the meantime he crashes with his parents and gets drunk in their basement. They've pretty much given up on him as a failure and no longer yell at him about anything but his skanky girlfriend. This upsets him, so he tries to spend as much time hanging around with his friends as possible. Except he's never had very many friends and most of them are in jail now. But he still has his girlfriend, Heloise, to fall back on. How many guys his age (25) who live in their parents' basements have a girlfriend to brag about?

Not that he actually likes her that much. She's clingy and she's always calling him. When he had a job in an ice cream shop she hung around so much that he got fired. He doesn't realize that she does these things because she wants to get out of her house and not because she feels very attached to him.

For now, she's what he has, so he's vaguely content. And her little sister Brianna is cute. Maybe he can hook up with her?

His parents say she's going to get him into trouble. They're right.

**Generic Innocent Bystander**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** +0 **Attack Bonus**: +0
**Defense:** +0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+2), Diplomacy 3 (+3), Drive 1 (+2), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (any) 3 (+3), Sense Motive 1 (+1), Stealth 1 (+2)

**Background:** A sample innocent bystander, male or female, who runs, hides, interferes with or assists the PCs at the GM's whim. If you would like to individualize the screaming, fleeing victims a little, we have some individual personalities and stats listed below.

**Crazy Daisy**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 2
**Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** -1
**Willpower Save:** 3

**Feats:** Rage +1
**Skills:** Intimidate 3 (+5), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (Panhandler) 1 (+1), Sense Motive 1 (+4), Stealth 1 (+2)
**Complications:** Insane. Can't communicate well. Does irrational things.

**Background:** A paranoid schizophrenic who lives in the park and spends her time shouting angry gibberish, Daisy has a tough enough time coping with an ordinary day, let alone a day like today. Tall, skinny and manic with a disorderly mop of blonde curls that stick out every which-way like a visible sign of madness, her face is deeply lined but it's hard to tell her age. She could be a badly-preserved thirty-five or she could be as much as fifty. No one seems to know her last name (it's Nolan, if a PC with telepathy can dig it up from the depths of her deranged mind).

If threatened, Daisy will panic, screaming and crying and yelling nonsense. Her behavior is entirely random. She will run or try to hide or freeze with a look of hopeless terror on her face, gesturing stiffly at nothing, with no rhyme or reason. If a PC tries to rescue her, there is a fifty percent chance that she will be able to hold herself together for long enough for them to fly her to safety and an equal chance that she will panic, freak out, and start struggling and hitting her rescuer. She can't follow instructions at all.

If some PC takes pity on her and tries to improve her lot, they are in for a rough haul. Daisy's lucidity varies—sometimes you can have a nearly normal conversation with her, and at other times she's hallucinating so badly that she barely knows you're there. No matter how sane or crazy she is at any given moment, she's argumentative, petty and obsessed with odd little details. She can and will find a way to turn any conversation into a quarrel.

Her mother was as crazy as she is, but she's dead now. Daisy's alcoholic father is long gone. He was a trucker and he didn't stick around for more than a few years of her childhood. She stayed with her cousins in Dubuque, Iowa for a while after her mom died, but fought too often with them and got kicked out on the street. Hospitalized for a suicide attempt, she had a hard time getting along with the other patients, so they turned her out of the hospital and gave her a bus ticket to the PC's home city.

**Lucas Jones**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 16 (+3) **Wis:** 14 (+2)
**Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** -1
**Willpower Save:** 2

**Skills:** Bluff 1 (+2), Diplomacy 3 (+4), Knowledge (History) 1 (+4), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 1 (+4), Notice 3 (+5), Sense Motive 3 (+5), Stealth 1 (+0)

**Background:** A smart, bookish African-American kid, Lucas is kind of a klutz and not very strong, but he's resourceful, brave and very good at keeping his head in a crisis. It's his natural inclination to want to help people, and if he sees anyone else in immediate danger he'll try to come to their aid. Otherwise his first priority is getting out of this situation alive, and he'll run, hide, sneak or fight according to whatever seems like the best way to escape. He takes instructions well and he'll do whatever rescue personnel or the PCs tell him to do, unless it's obviously stupid or suicidal.

Lucas is nine and already in sixth grade, but he's no science whiz—literature and creative writing are more the areas where he excels.

He came downtown with his mom to go shopping. She had a doctor's appointment as well, and rather than sit around the waiting room, Lucas thought he would go read in the park across the street. He's holding a copy of Jack London's "Call of the Wild" in one hand and he won't part with it unless he absolutely has to—it's his favorite book (at least this month).

The Joneses live so far out in the suburbs that they weren't really aware of the trouble in the city. Even if they had been, they might have come downtown anyway—Mom doesn't get a lot of days off work.

**Ethanol Jake**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 8 (-1)
**Con:** 8 (-1) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** -1
**Fortitude Save:** -1 **Reflexes Save:** -1
**Willpower Save:** -1

**Skills:** Notice 2 (+1), Knowledge (Streetwise), 4 (+4), Notice 2 (+1), Profession (Panhandler) 1 (+1), Sense

Motive 3 (+2), Stealth 3 (+2), Survival 4 (+3)
**Complications:** Hopeless alcoholic

**Background:** A scrawny, bleary-eyed little bum who looks older than his sixty-one years, Ethanol Jake has been a homeless alcoholic for decades, living only for his next drink. Conventional booze doesn't do enough for him anymore, so he drinks rubbing alcohol—hence his nickname. It hasn't killed him, yet, but it has done terrible things to his liver and brains. He looks like a classic wino. An elderly man with an unkempt white beard, missing front teeth and ragged, mismatched clothes.

His personal history isn't very colorful. He was always a party animal, always liked to drink, never much cared for anything else. In the sixties he hung around with drunks and burn-outs, drinking in the street and crashing in squats. Not exactly a hippie, he knew a lot of them and sometimes got high with them, but for the most part he was interested in drinking rather than drugs. Most of his contemporaries on the "street scene" had trust funds or indulgent parents to fall back on, but Jake's father was a bartender who didn't have the time or money to support his drunken misfit son. As the seventies wore on the guys he used to party with got jobs or went back to college or died. Jake barely noticed and kept on drinking. At some point he slipped over the line between being a colorful young bohemian who sometimes slept in the street into a drunken old failure with nowhere else to sleep. He has never served in the armed forces or run a company or held a job on Wall Street, although he has told all of these stories (and more) while begging for spare change.

Jake is a self-destructive screw-up, but he doesn't want to die. He also has a sentimental streak and if he sees someone else in trouble he will genuinely want to help them. However, his brain is so damaged that he will space out in the middle of whatever he is doing and stand there blinking vacantly. If the PCs call out instructions to him (for example "go over there" or "get out of the way") he will do his very best to comply. Alas, his best isn't very good. If he tries to follow even the simplest instructions, he will lose track of what he's doing in the middle and freeze, looking around in puzzlement as he tries to get his bearings.

**Winfield Carson**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 14 (+2)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 1
**Defense:** 1 (+1 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2
**Fortitude Save:** 3 **Reflexes Save:** 2
**Willpower Save:** 3

**Feats:** Dodge Focus 1
**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+4), Climb 2 (+5), Craft (Electronics) 4 (+6), Craft (Mechanical) 3 (+5), Diplomacy 4 (+4), Disable Device 3 (+5), Medical 2 (+4), Notice 3 (+5), Profession (Electrician) 4 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 3 (+4), Survival 3 (+5)

**Background:** A fugitive from justice, two years ago he killed a man in a bar fight in New Mexico and he's been living as a vagrant ever since. He can't use his credit cards or IDs, and the little cash he had on him when he fled has long since dried up, so he wanders from town to town, begging for spare change. He seldom stays in any one city longer than he has to. When asked, he gives his name as John.

He was a tramp electrician before he got in trouble, and spent his life traveling around between jobs for the various Con-Ed power-plants. He didn't have deep roots anywhere, and certainly didn't have enough money for a prolonged legal defense. His family was in no position to help him—his father is a retired plumber and his mother is a housewife. In any case he would never have dragged his troubles down on them.

He's tough and competent, but desperate to avoid having anything to do with the law. A middle-aged man with a thick red beard that comes down over his chest, he carries his belongings in a rolling bag and wears whatever dingy clothes he can find.

Watchful and cautious, he never starts trouble and tries not to draw attention to himself. He sometimes does work as a day-laborer or watches a street vendor's stand for them in exchange for a few dollars and a place to sit. While he used to drink and smoke pot too much, he has completely sworn off both these things, afraid that if he ever lets his guard down he'll get careless.

Capable and brave, he has some first aid training and is willing to help anyone who looks like they're in trouble, but his first priority is to stay out of the hands of the authorities. Super heroes make him very nervous and he won't want to spend any more time around them than he has to. Under no circumstances will he let them hand him over to any rescue personnel, even if he is hurt. If the PCs can get him to work with them, he could be very useful, but it won't be easy to gain his trust, even if they save him from danger.

**Lonnie Bodrug**
**PL:** 1

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 1
**Defense:** 1 (+1 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2
**Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+6), Climb 4 (+6), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Notice +2 (+3), Profession (Collection Agent) 4 (+4), Stealth 3 (+4)
**Complications:** Will resist anything he's told to do

**Background:** A big, burly guy with a short mullet that's going thin in the middle, Lonnie's life peaked while he was a high school football player and he's never outgrown the hairdo he wore back then. These days he works for a collection agency, harassing people over the phone for old credit card debts. A natural-born bully, he's good at his job, but he still yearns to be a mercenary soldier-of-fortune. He went so far as to join the Marines just after high school, but couldn't handle the discipline and washed out of basic training. He has only recently arrived in town and has yet to find a girlfriend, although he's been harassing one of the administrative staff at his office and hopes that this will blossom into a romance instead of a lawsuit.
A redneck from north Florida, Lonnie is proud of his Southern accent and distrusts people who aren't white protestant Southerners like himself.

He works way out in the suburbs and doesn't like coming into the city. The only reason he happens to be here today is that a department store downtown is having a sale on short-sleeved polyester dress shirts. He refuses to be cowed by all the freaky events that have been happening lately and he's taking a shortcut through the park out of sheer contrary cussedness.

Lonnie is strong, although he's been getting fat, and he's taken a fair number of martial arts courses. But he's worse than useless in the present crisis. Mindlessly aggressive, hostile and defiant, he will do the opposite of whatever the PCs tell him to, and will refuse to help anyone but himself. He's fearless in a stupid, contrary way, but has no intention of attacking Badmoon on his own. He will probably have to carried off the field by the exasperated PCs, perhaps unconscious.

# Scene Nine:
# Diamonds Are A Megalomaniac's Best Friend

**Summary:** Mr. Mandrake is furious that one of the gems needed to perform the transformation ritual is flawed. It's the emerald, naturally. He should have known (Grumble... Mutter...) Flawless emeralds are so incredibly rare—especially large ones.

Consulting demonic spirits, Mr. Mandrake learns that a high-end diamond store called "Gellman Brothers" actually has a huge flawless emerald in its safe. This may be the only suitable gem in town.

Mr. Mandrake dispatches Rathbone and a squad of henchmen to raid Gellman Brothers. He instructs them to handle this assignment delicately. This annoys Rathbone, who decides to attack in the middle of the afternoon to maximize the potential body count.

**Combat Tactics:** Rathbone will lead a frontal assault. He will station two of his men on the roof to pick off targets of opportunity. Several henchmen will remain in the Frightmobile and are ready to engage approaching police cars or heroes with man-portable rocket launchers. Rathbone will also send two henchmen to breach the store from the rear exit or kill anyone trying to leave.

Then he lobs some grenades through the store's front window and walks inside.

### What if they've already killed Rathbone?

It's possible that the PCs might have already killed or incapacitated Rathbone in some previous scene. If he's no longer available, Mr. Mandrake will send Badmoon instead. If the PCs have taken him out as well, then he'll send Cryptic with the team. If Cryptic isn't available, he'll grit his teeth with frustration, send the Wicked and hope for the best.

He'll only send Grimson or Killarina if he has absolutely no other options. If he's completely out of supervillains, double the number of thugs.

**Role Playing Notes:**

1. The copious wealth on display and in the Secure Room will distract Rathbone from his mission for several rounds as he spends time gathering up a large number of jewels. Why does a guy who can't eat or drink and doesn't need shelter want money? Go figure.

2. As all hell breaks loose, numerous people will be gawking at the commotion from the street and the office building on the other side. We have some stats for a generic innocent bystander and for specific NPCs if you need them on Pages 93-95.

3. If any of the heroes attacks the henchmen with the rocket launchers, there is a chance that one of the thugs will fire his weapon in a blind panic. His rocket will miss the target and smash into a nearby building.

4. Directly across from Gellman Brothers is a high-rise office building housing a pediatrics office full of children, several of whom are standing at the windows, watching the battle.

5. If a henchman panics and fires without aiming, his rocket will most likely hit the building directly across the street, causing one or more children to plummet ten stories to the ground. Heroic action of the most desperate sort will be required to save them. See the picture at the beginning of this scene. (Yikes!)

6. Rathbone will engage heroes until he finds himself in an untenable situation. He will then use an amulet (one use only) given to him by Mr. Mandrake to teleport himself back to the estate. If he somehow gets separated from the amulet, he'll run for the back door and the Frightmobile will pick him up in the alley outside.

7. One of the bank robbers is extremely vain (his name is Reuben Lord—you can find stats and background information on him in Appendix A, Pages 121-122). He has a rare Lavatera flower pinned to his uniform. Anyone who knows anything about botany can recognize that this is an incredibly rare and expensive flower—the equivalent of a black orchid or even a ghost orchid (Knowledge: Life Sciences Check vs. DC 15). It looks strange too. Anyone who makes a Notice Check vs. DC 15 will see that it's highly unusual, whether they have any skill with Life Sciences or not.

8. Research into where that Lavatera Flower might have come from will reveal that Doctor Theron Anton West has grown prizewinning Lavatera plants on a regular basis. This is the clue that may crack the case (if the PC's haven't already figured out Mr. Mandrake's identity)

STRANGE MAGIC

# GELLMAN BROTHERS JEWELRY

**1: The Plaza, 2: Vestibule, 3: Main Display Floor, 4: Sales Associate's Office, 5: Break Room, 6: Supply Closet, 7: Hall, 8: Restroom, 9: Mr. Sheffield's Office, 10: Secure Room, 11: Loading Dock**

**1: The Plaza**
To enter Gellman Brothers, you walk down a few granite steps into a sunken plaza, under the second floor of the building. Immense square pillars hold the rest of the building overhead—you're under a kind of overhang.

Each Pillar is Toughness 8. If you smash one loose and use it as a weapon you will find that it weighs 15 tons and does 10 Damage. Knock down more than three pillars and the building will let out a deep ominous groan and begin to vibrate. It's not going to collapse during the course of the battle, but it has become structurally unsound and will probably have to be condemned and torn down within a few months to prevent a collapse.

You can see directly into Gellman Brothers' main display room through a set of bay windows that run all the way to the ground. The windows are PL1. The Frightmobile will come crashing down the steps and into the bay windows without taking any damage.

The door is also made of Toughness 1 glass. It would take a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to open it, but of course it's not locked.

**2: Vestibule**
A little space between the outer doors and the Main Display Floor. It mostly serves as a space for customers to wipe their feet or shake out their umbrellas. Both sets of doors are made of Toughness 1 glass and open both ways—in and out. There are windows on either side of the interior door and you can see through them into the shop. A thick grey industrial rug covers the floor.

**3: Main Display Floor**
Located just inside the vestibule, the main display floor contains counters and cases full of Gellman Brothers' wares. Sales Associates typically stand behind the counters to serve the customers.

A huge old wrought-iron antique cash register holds about four hundred dollars in it (the register is Toughness 7, weighs eighty pounds, takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to open when locked, and does 3 Damage if used as a weapon). The register sees little use. Most of their customers use checks or credit cards.

At least fifty thousand dollars worth of jewelry are on display in the cases, but it's only a fraction of their stock. The display cases are made of plate glass with brass fittings. Plate glass is tougher than safety glass. The cases are Toughness 3 and will do 2 Damage to anyone who breaks one with their bare hands, unless they make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 20. The cases are bolted to the floor and require a Strength Check vs. DC 25 to rip loose. Each one weighs about eight hundred pounds. A case does 4 Damage if you pick it up and hit someone with it. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to unlock a case without a key—not that Rathbone intends to bother. Break the glass or fail the Disable Device Check while opening the lock and a loud alarm will sound. The store's security system will also send a signal to the police.

Plate glass makes a dangerous weapon. A good-sized chunk can do up to 2 or even 3 Damage, although you have to make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 every time you attack with it to keep from doing 1 Damage to your hand.

**4: The Sales Associate Office**
Behind the display area is the office where most of the store's work gets done. Long counters run along the walls. Work tables and filing cabinets rest here and there. There's a copy machine in one corner.

Not only do the assistant jewelers transact the store's business here, keeping track of accounts and processing bills, it's also where they do repair watches, clean gems and jewelry, reset loose stones and all the other physical work that jewelers do. While none

of the three assistant jewelers has an assigned work-space, each one has a spot they prefer, and each one's preferred place has a few ongoing projects lying around (a half disassembled watch, for example, or a piece of jewelry they're in the process of taking apart and cleaning).

The round green stools here weigh 45 pounds, and do 2 Damage if used as weapons. The tables weigh 150 pounds each and do 3 Damage. If you tip a table over and try to hide behind it, it's Toughness 4 and just big enough to provide Concealment for a character on all fours. Filing cabinets weigh about 200 pounds and do 3 Damage. The copy machine weighs 300 pounds and does 4 Damage.

While there are plenty of tools and jeweler's supplies here (grinding powders, polishes, cleaning solutions) there isn't likely to be much a PC could improvise a weapon out of.

**5: The Break Room**
This room contains a few tables and stools, a microwave, a small refrigerator, a TV and a sink. The stools are pretty uncomfortable—Mr. Sheffield doesn't like employees lingering in here for long.

The door is fairly solid (Toughness 40 and it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock. It's almost certainly unlocked when Rathbone attacks the store

The tables are Toughness 3, weigh 150 pounds and do 3 Damage if used as weapons. Each table is big enough for one people to take cover behind, if they crouch down low. The round green stools weigh 30 pounds each and do 2 Damage. The refrigerator is Toughness 2, weighs 100 pounds, and does 3 Damage if used as a bludgeon. The TV is Toughness 1 and requires a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to rip off its mount. It does 2 Damage if used as a weapon.

**6: Supply Closet**
This closet holds spare jeweler's tools and office supplies on its shelves. There is enough room for two normal-sized people to hide inside. The door is Toughness 3 and doesn't lock. The shelves are Toughness 2. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to tear one loose from the wall. A shelf does 2 Damage if used as a weapon. It is unlikely that you could find anything in here you might use as a weapon. But of course the GM could decide otherwise.

**7: Hall**
An empty hall, which leads between the Sales Associate's Office, Mr. Sheffield's Office, the Break Room, the Loading Dock and the Secure Room.

The doors to the Sales Associate's Office, the Break Room and Mr. Sheffield's Office are all Toughness 3 and can all be locked (Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick any of the locks).

The door to the Loading Dock is Toughness 6 and requires a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock. It locks from the inside.

The door to the Secure Room is made of steel (Toughness 8) and it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 25 to open the lock.

**8: Employee Restroom**
The door to this room is Toughness 3. Its flimsy lock takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick. You can force the door open with a Strength Check vs. DC 20.

It might be tempting to hide in here when violence breaks out in the store, but don't do it—the room is a deathtrap. There is no rear exit and nowhere good to hide in here. Nor is there a window to escape through.

The toilets are Toughness 2. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to yank one out of the wall. It does 3 Damage if used as a weapon. The one urinal has the same stats. The sink is Toughness 3, and a Strength

Check vs. DC 20 can yank it off the wall. It does 3 Damage if you hit someone with it.

The doors to the two toilet stalls are Toughness 2 and require a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to break off. Doors and stall partitions both do 3 Damage if used as weapons.

The partition by the urinal has the same stats as the stall partitions. It does not go down far enough for anyone to actually be able to hide behind it.

**9: Mr. Sheffield's Office**

The lair of the store's loudmouthed, angry manager. It looks grotesquely oversized, but that's because he has to use it impress rich clients, who will go back to their own gigantic offices afterwards with a sense of confidence in Mr. Sheffield.

Every piece of decoration in the room is related to football. The mug on his desk, the pictures on the wall, everything bears the logo of the local football team. Not that Mr. Sheffield actually cares about football very much. He had to pick some theme for the room, so he picked football. It makes clients feel they know him, and puts them more at ease.

In the event of a crisis, Mr. Sheffield can probably be found cowering behind or under his massive desk. If someone else enters the room and tries to take shelter with him, he will angrily hiss for them to go away and find their own hiding spot. If they try to take cover behind the desk, he'll attempt to push them away. He's totally astounded and baffled by his own cowardly behavior. He's fantasized a lot about how he would act if someone tried to rob the store, and in his daydreams he has always acted like a hero. Now that the moment has finally come, he's mystified at his actions.

The desk itself seems made to cower behind. Up to three Medium sized characters can easily take cover behind it, and its granite top and sturdy hardwood construction give it a Toughness of 6. It weighs five hundred pounds and does 4 Damage if a super-strong character picks it up and uses it as a bludgeon. There is a letter opener on the desk (with the local football team emblem on the handle) that can be used as a dagger and does 2 Damage.

The desk is usually kept locked The Desk's lock is pretty good and requires a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 too pick. Each of the room's expensive Swedish chairs weighs about fifty pounds and does 2 Damage if used as a weapon. The hardwood cabinets around the edges of the room are filled with papers. The cabinets are Toughness 3. Full, each one weighs 400 pounds and does 3 Damage.

**10: The Secure Room**

This is the raid's target. Sealed with a Toughness 8 steel door, (it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 25 to open the lock) this room contains all the shop's most valuable wares in locked metal drawers. Every one of the staff has a key that will open the locked drawers inside, but only Mr. Sheffield, the manager, knows the combination and has the key to open the main door. To keep from having to bother him constantly, they often leave the door ajar during business hours, even though that's strictly against the rules. When Rathbone attacks the store, it happens to be closed—just his bad luck!

The locked cases inside are Toughness 10 and so are the walls. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to open each drawer, although Rathbone is unlikely to bother with that. The metal table in the middle of the room is Toughness 8 and it's anchored very securely to the floor (Strength Check vs. DC 30 to uproot). It weighs 600 pounds and does 5 Damage if used as a weapon. It's big enough for one person to take cover behind.

The emerald Rathbone has been instructed to retrieve is in drawer #35, just above the floor at the back right corner. Every one of the clerks knows where it is—that emerald is one of the store's most prized assets, but Gladys Sark (see her description at the end of this scene, on Page 159) will panic and be unable to remember if the robbers demand that she show them.

**11: The Loading Dock**

The rear door leads to the small loading dock at the back of the building. It isn't used very much—they seldom get really big deliveries.

If things go haywire, Rathbone will try to exit the building through the loading dock. The Frightmobile will come around to meet him, if it hasn't been incapacitated.

The steel door leading out here from the shop is Toughness 6. It locks from the inside (Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock).

The dumpsters across the alley are both Toughness 6 and weigh 1,000 pounds each. Either one does 5 Damage if used as a weapon. There really isn't much else out here to hit anybody with.

**The Street**

There isn't much traffic this afternoon, but the GM should feel free to have a car or truck come barreling down the street if it would add to the suspense.

Right now three cars are parked outside the store, one on the far side of the street and two on the near side.

The big old powder-blue station wagon on the near side weighs 2 tons (it's crammed full of junk, which increases its weight) and is Toughness 4 (although of course the windshield and windows are Toughness 1).

The red sports car on the same side of the street weighs just over a ton and is Toughness 3 (there's a lot of fiberglass in its construction)

The big dark sedan on the far side of the street weighs 1 ½ tons and is Toughness 4. Its specially reinforced windows are Toughness 2.

The sports car and the sedan both have alarm systems that will go of at the slightest jostle (Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to deactivate either one). The station wagon has no alarm at all.

The red fire hydrants marked on the map are each Toughness 8, weigh 100 pounds and do 3 Damage if ripped loose and used as weapons. This will also cause a tremendous jet of water to leap into the air from the stump of the broken hydrant, with game effects (if any) to be determined by the GM.

**If the PCs Win**

What happens next depends on how thoroughly the PCs have won. If they have managed to keep Rathbone from making off with the emerald, let them congratulate themselves. Then, the next day, another one of Mr. Mandrake's villains (probably Badmoon) leads an assault on another jewelry store (one the PCs haven't staked out) and snatches a different jewel that will do just as well.

If you give your PCs the clue with the Lavatera flower, they're almost sure to go straight to Mr. Mandrake's estate. So feed it to them or hold it back, just as you prefer.

If the PCs have managed to capture any of the assault team the GM can decide to have them tell the PCs where to find Mr. Mandrake—or even reveal the whole evil scheme, if that's convenient. Yeah, we know it says under their description that these mooks don't know anything about Mr. Mandrake's plans, but you can always just ignore that.

It doesn't really matter whether or not the Frightmobile gets destroyed—this is the last scene in which the Goth Squad uses it, anyway (unless you're running this scene before Scene 3). In the event that you really are running Scene Nine before Scene Three, then assume Mr. Mandrake also has a big spooky van with a skull for a hood ornament and exactly the same stats as the Frightmobile.

If Rathbone himself gets killed or captured here, then he won't be able to coordinate the defense of the estate, but his men are all capable hoods and will act pretty much the same way without him. They just won't have his extra muscle to back them up.

**If the PCs Lose**

Unless too many of the PCs get killed or incapacitated, a loss here isn't fatal to the adventure. In fact it's almost better if Rathbone gets away with the gem, particularly if the PCs had to make the heroic choice to save the falling kids rather than chase after the bad guys.

If the PCs actually fail to save any children, then you can bet they'll be hungry for revenge. They also may feel kind of demoralized—some Players will actually consider quitting a campaign over a thing like that. You will probably want to give them a shot at Scene Ten as quickly as possible, even if it means using a Deus ex-Machina to let them know where they can find Mr. Mandrake.

If the party has been devastated, then you have two options to save the game before it collapses in anger and grumbling. You can throw your surviving PCs into the climactic battle and scale back the opposition they are going to face, or you can let them introduce new characters immediately. And we do mean immediately—this will be a moment of crisis and you will want to get them over it fast, before everyone decides to go play a CCG instead.

If you opt to scale back Mr. Mandrake's defenses, a good way to do it is to assume that it takes all his concentration to maintain the spell he is casting, and that he has nothing left to spend on fighting the heroes. Then make the ritual easier to disrupt. If you can bring everything to a halt by snuffing out one of the bonfires, then the Goth Squad will have to work lot harder to keep the PCs from wrecking everything. As an added touch, change the rules so that when the ritual gets disrupted, the Heart of Set explodes, making it impossible to ever perform the spell again.

**If Rathbone Gets Captured**

How Rathbone acts in captivity depends on the GM's needs. If you've run this scene in the middle of the adventure, he hangs tough, sneering at the PCs and making threats. He's hard to intimidate and if you do manage to force him into giving you information about his boss, he'll lie and make up something unrelated (maybe he'll accuse James Durzic of being the evil mastermind behind everything, maybe he'll claim that Mr. Mandrake has captured and replaced one of the other PCs with an evil duplicate).

If on the other hand you are running this scene in sequence, as encounter number nine, and the PCs need an extra hint to direct them to Hell House, Rathbone will betray Mr. Mandrake and tell the PCs everything, in exchange for his freedom.

If the PCs are about to coerce Rathbone into telling them Mr. Mandrake's whereabouts (with Mind Control, for example, or by reading his thoughts) and you aren't ready for them to show up at Hell House, then Mr. Mandrake has placed an enchantment on him that will make him die before he can reveal anything. Of course he's technically already dead, but you know what we mean,

If you like, you can make his "death" extra-scary and ominous—any PC in contact with his mind feels some terrible force, as something blacker than Rathbone's own evil

soul reaches up and snuffs him out, sending his spirit shrieking back down to Hell. His bones fall apart on the floor and a small black cloud with hateful glowing eyes forms above them.

"Oh, no you don't" the cloud says, glowering down at Rathbone's remains. Then it glares at the PCs. "Soon," it says, and vanishes.

**Getting to the Next Scene:** If you are playing this scene in order, then the very next one is the big climactic confrontation on Mr. Mandrake's estate. If the PC have the Lavatera flower clue, let them find out what it means really quickly. Otherwise, have some other lead suddenly pan out. They discover a copy of Gavin Kolchack's unpublished article, or a captive decides to talk or someone decides to follow the zombies around and discovers that they are all headed for Theron Anton West's estate. If they have already been looking for Dr. West, but haven't been able to locate his estate, they stumble over it unexpectedly.

One way or another, the mystery is solved and the PCs arrive at the creepy gates of Hell House, ready to do some damage.

**NPCs for this Scene:** We have some employees of Gellman Brothers Jewelry (both generic and individual), some customers, some innocent bystanders who might be walking past on the street outside and some plummeting kids. Rathbone's stats can be found on Page 112 and his thugs can be found on Pages 120-125. Reuben Lord (see his description on Pages 121-122) is one of the thugs, and as mentioned above, the Lavatera flower pinned to his lapel may be the clue that breaks the case open at last.

**Customers**

If the GM needs descriptions and individual personalities for any of the customers, we have three of them listed after the Generic stat block. There could be more than three customers in the store, if you like.

**Generic Customer**

Here are some stats for a generic customer. They may run and hide, try to escape, try to help the wounded or pocket a diamond or two for themselves, at the GM's discretion.

**Rajiv Gupta**

**PL:** 3

**Str:** 13 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3)
**Con:** 9 (-1) **Int:** 16 (+3)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** -1 **Fortitude Save:** -1
**Reflexes Save:** 3 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Concentration 5 (+7), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Knowledge (Behavioral Sciences) 2 (+5), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 8 (+11), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 3 (+6), Languages (English, Hindi), Medicine 8 (+11), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (Doctor) 8 (+11)

**Feats:** Second Chance (Failed "Medical" skill Checks)

**Complications:** Workaholic, can deny his fiancé nothing.

**Background:** A successful, handsome young doctor, Rajiv is here to buy a wedding ring for his fiancé, Brittani Hardcastle. She has come along to make sure the diamond he buys is big enough. He knows it's unorthodox, but he loves seeing the look on her face when he buys her expensive jewelry and he can't resist bringing her. In fact he can't deny her anything. Rajiv is just starting to live the good life he's worked and slaved away for since he was a child, and despite her moodiness and infidelity, Brittani is a crucial piece of that life—one he doesn't want to lose. He's mad for skinny blondes and can't believe his good luck at having acquired one (although his good looks, earnest charm and high income had a lot more to do with it than luck). Rajiv's father is a doctor and his mother is a lawyer, and he has grown up bearing the weight of their expectations. He excelled in all the high-pressure schools they sent him to, got his medical degree from a prestigious East Coast university, did his

internship at Johns Hopkins and now after years of constant toil he is starting to make a lot of money. He also has an ulcer at the age of twenty-eight. A third-generation American, Rajiv has no trace of an Indian accent. He wears sweaters at home and very nice Italian suits at parties. He is usually so exhausted that he can barely stand, but he's felt this way for most of his life and he's used to it. He lives for his things—his BMW sports car and his unbelievably expensive audio system and his Milanese furniture. Yet he seldom has any time to spend with them. He's an ophthalmic surgeon by trade—one of the youngest in his profession, but he knows a great deal about medicine of every sort and is superb at administering first aid. His first priority, however, is to make sure that his fiancé gets to safety. Until he can make this happen he won't be willing to help anyone else. He will die for her if he has to. He will also fight to the death to keep anyone from stealing her ring, because she expects him to.

**Brittani Hardcastle**

**PL:** 2

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 1 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 2

**Feats:** Attractive, Distract (linked to Intimidate), Fascinate (linked to Bluff), Taunt
**Skills:** Bluff 6 (+9), Diplomacy 4 (+7), Intimidate 4 (+7), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 6 (+7), Notice 4 (+6), Search 3 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 2 (+3)

**Background:** In college, when people asked Brittani Hardcastle about her major she would laugh harshly and say "Major? I'm here for the ring, man."

She meant a wedding ring, of course, but she also meant the brass ring. While she was a business student, she had no intention of actually working, and like her mother before her, was in college to sell her looks to the highest bidder. She found him. A handsome, compliant workaholic with a six figure starting salary, Rajiv will do. She's been his live-in fiancé for the past two years and has him so thoroughly wrapped around her finger by now that she doesn't have to sleep with him at all anymore. She has affairs whenever she feels like it and has been caught twice. Both times she threw tantrums, refused to speak to Rajiv for days and he had to buy large and expensive items of jewelry to calm her down.

Today they're here to shop for a wedding ring. She wants one with a really big diamond, and if she doesn't get killed, she's probably going to get it.

Brittani is a pretty blonde (an authentic one) with narrow, flat eyes. Her hair and clothes are ostentatious and she wears expensive jewelry, but it's all quite tasteful—she may or may not have a soul, but she undeniably has style. She likes drugs and alcohol but she's not an addict. A smoker since the age of ten, her voice has a sultry rasp that men find irresistible.

Brittani is pretty self-aware, but has never really troubled herself about the question of whether or not she is a good person. She likes pretty things, likes to enjoy herself and

sometimes feels the need to express a little spiteful, petty cruelty (not much, though—she's much more thoughtless than she is vindictive)

She does not like to exert herself, be bored or experience physical or emotional pain. She will do whatever is required to gain the things she likes and avoid the things she dislikes. She does not go out of her way to hurt other people unless she's very bored and it's the only available form of entertainment, but she does not avoid it either.

In the present crisis, she will act only to protect herself. No one else's life means a thing to her. She will want to be rescued first, she will be angry if her hair or dress get messed up, or if a hero makes her feel afraid or guilty about something. She will probably limit herself to yelling at them if they annoy her in the course of saving her life, but she's not above suing them or even lying to the authorities to get them in trouble if she gets really peeved.

**Digby Turnblatt Gibbons**
**PL:** 1

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 8 (-1)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** -1 **Attack Bonus**: 0 **Defense:** -1 **Toughness Save:** -1 **Fortitude Save:** -1 **Reflexes Save:** -1 **Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Diplomacy 4 (+6), Knowledge (Business) 3 (+3), Knowledge (Civics) 4 (+4), Knowledge (History) 2 (+2)
**Feats:** Benefit (Wealth) 3, Connected
**Complications:** Good natured, addled and easily confused. Adores fit young men.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (moves no faster than 15 feet per action)

**Background:** Mr. Gibbons is a sweet old man. Kind-hearted and naive, he's become feeble in his old age and he's starting to lose his memory. People often have to repeat themselves when they explain things to him. He never takes offence, smiling and nodding with good humor. His wife dresses him well and he's always dapper, with a red handkerchief in the pocket of his pinstriped suit. His white moustache is always flawlessly trimmed.

Mr. Gibbons is here to buy a diamond necklace for his wife as a fiftieth anniversary present. He keeps coming back and dithering over the choice, largely because he is hopelessly enamored of the manger, Mr. Sheffield. Rough young men are Mr. Gibbons' one real weakness. He lusts after them hopelessly and harmlessly from afar. A lot of male shop clerks in the vicinity know him as a mild nuisance, but a decent old guy.

If Mr. Gibbons gets into an emergency situation he will become confused and may run the wrong way or otherwise endanger himself. He's pretty fragile and can move no faster than 15 feet per Action.

He's also very rich and will be extremely grateful to anyone who helps him in his hour of need. He wouldn't mind being carried to safety in the arms of a strapping young lad in a cape, either.

**Employees**
We start with a template for a generic employee, suitable for running, screaming, getting in the way or being held hostage (though some will behave bravely instead).

While you could of course run the scene using nothing but the generic template, we have also provided you with three individual clerks and a manager. Each has their own motivations, personality and stats. They will all behave differently from one another in a crisis.

**Generic Employee**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 4 (+4), Notice 1 (+1), Profession (Jeweler) 4 (+5), Sense Motive 3 (+3)

**Background:** The clerks here make most of their living from commission. If they think they have any chance of saving the store from being looted most of them will do their best—their whole livelihood is tied up in it.

**Holden Sheffield (The Manager)**
**PL:** 2

**Str:** 16 (+3) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 12 (+1)
**Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 2
**Defense:** 2 **Toughness Save:** 2
**Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 2
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 5 (+7), Diplomacy 1 (+3), Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (Business) 4 (+5), Knowledge (Civics) 3 (+4), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (Jeweler) 4 (+5), Profession (Store Manager) 4 (+5) Sense Motive 2 (+2)
**Feats:** Startle

**Background:** Mr. Sheffield is a demanding boss. You can tell the moment you see him that he has had a long and successful career in sales. He's a big, handsome guy with black hair that's going grey and heavy muscles from playing sports all his life. He's getting a gut now and there's more gray in his hair than ever. Nervous and prone to explosive rages, he conceals how much tension he feels by shouting a lot. He's unaware of how much he does this and doesn't know that his employees hate him (except for old Ruiz Pachanga, who is pointlessly, slavishly loyal to him).
In the event of a crisis Sheffield's nervous nature gets the better of him and he behaves with appalling cowardice, although he won't show much visible sign of fear. He will seek to save himself, with the excuse that he has a wife (whom he ignores) kids (who hate his guts) and a grandchild (who he has never seen). He is actually shocked and bewildered at his own bad behavior. He always assumed that if something like this happened, he'd be a hero.

**Ruiz Pachanga (Senior Clerk)**
**PL:** 1

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0)
**Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+6), Diplomacy 6 (+8), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 5 (+5), Notice 1 (+3), Profession (Jeweler) 6 (+6), Sense Motive 1 (+3)

**Background:** An eternal optimist, Mr. Pachanga is convinced that great things are just around the corner for himself and his son, Hector (who also works as a clerk at Gellman Brothers). Loud, dramatic and pompous, he is a Latin gentleman of the old school, right down to the ends of his waxed moustache. His wife has left him (she said he was obsessed with his job) but even though she's been gone for ten years he's sure she'll come back.

He lives in a small apartment with his son, who he is convinced will grow up to be a great jeweler and a rich, successful man with lots of kids. He hasn't noticed that his son is gay, or that the boy is nearly forty and shows no signs of becoming a success at anything. Ruiz knows that he must be stern with the lad and give him lots of encouragement (by which he means lots of nagging petty criticism). He constantly

corrects the other, less senior clerks as well, but they tolerate it better than his son, since they respect his expertise in jewelry, which is frankly superb.

Foolishly brave, in a crisis he will do his best to help his customers get to safety, but he will insist on helping ladies and old people first, because that's how it's done. He does not grasp how frail he has become or how little chance he would stand against a well-trained professional thug.

**Gladys Sark (Junior Clerk)**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 5 (+8), Diplomacy 4 (+7), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 4 (+4), Notice 1 (+1), Profession (Jeweler) 1 (+1), Sense Motive 4 (+4)
**Feats:** Attractive

**Background:** Bored and silly, Gladys survives as a jeweler because of her good looks and giddy charm. Female patrons don't like her but rich older men do backflips over her. She doesn't know very much about jewelry but she knows how to make the manager and the senior clerk like her. She has been baffled for a while at her inability to entrance Mr. Gibbons. He's always nice to her, but he's always nice to everyone and he never tries to dally or keep her talking like most of her older gentlemen customers. What is the matter?

Her boyfriend is a burly muscle-jock named Charlie Muntz and she thinks he's on his way to see her right when Rathbone attacks the exchange. In fact he's forgotten, but she won't stop babbling that he's sure to show up and save everybody at any second. When things go haywire, Gladys will freeze or run in the wrong direction in a blind panic and she'll probably have to be rescued. Not particularly heroic, she would certainly try to save someone if she saw that they were in immediate danger, but she wouldn't know how to do a good job of it.

**Hector Pachanga (Clerk)**
**PL:** 1

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 2 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 2 **Toughness Save:** 1
**Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 2
**Willpower Save:** 0

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+5), Diplomacy 5 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 6 (+7), Notice 6 (+6), Perform (Dance) 5 (+6) Perform (Sing) 5 (+6), Profession (Jeweler) 6 (+7), Sense Motive 5 (+5)

**Background:** Being a jeweler is so dull. And he has to work with his dad. Some days Hector just wants to scream. He has always wanted to be a dancer or an actor or...something glamorous and ethereal. He wishes he didn't spend so much of his time partying and spent more on perfecting his drag act. But it's so hard not to want to get drunk when you've been helping fat ugly rich people try on jewels that they're not fit to wear all day, with your dad standing there judging you the whole time. Hector has tried to leave for New York more than once but he always winds up back here at his old job eventually.

Everyone who knows him as a screechy party boy would expect him to break down and run shrieking at the first hint of danger, but that's because they've never seen him on the job. At work Hector is calm, focused and meticulous. He's also an exceptionally good jeweler and knows everything about selling high-end jewelry anyone could possibly want to know (but not enough for his dad).

When all hell breaks loose at Gellman Brothers, Hector will keep his head and try his very best to help his customers get out of the situation safely. Even though he despises them.

If it looks as though he is about to die, he may suddenly blurt out to his father that he is gay—which will shock the old man to the point of frozen immobility. Old Mr. Pachanga is the only person Hector has ever met who didn't know that about him instantly.

**Plummeting Children**
Look out below! Here are stats for a generic child to rescue from the conflagration across the street, as well as a couple of individual personalities you can use if the PCs get to know any of the kids they are saving. As always, you're not obliged to use any of the individual write-ups. They're just here to help you if you need them.

**Generic Plummeting Child**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 6 (-2) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 10 (-1) **Wis:** 10 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0 **Defense:** 1
**Toughness Save:** 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
**Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+5), Stealth 4 (+4)
**Complications:** Cute and adorable
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (can't drive a car or reach things on high shelves)

**Harmony Fink**
**PL:** 1

**Str:** 6 (-2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 8 (-1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 2 **Attack Bonus**: 1 **Defense:** 1
**Toughness Save:** 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
**Reflexes Save:** 2 **Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+6)
**Feats:** Distract (linked to Intimidate)
**Complications:** Incapable of being nice, treats everyone like crap.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (can't drive a car or reach things on high shelves)

**Background:** A mean rich girl, Harmony is used to getting her way, but it hasn't made her happy. Sullen, ill-tempered and spiteful, she will struggle and fight with the PCs who are trying to rescue her, just for the sake of being contrary. Once they have rescued her, she will burst into tears and scream at them that they are in big trouble for touching her without permission. They'll hear from her Daddy's lawyer, she shrieks. And he's big and scary and mean!

Astute PCs may wonder aloud if she might be the grand-daughter of mean old Mr. Eustace Fink, whose foundation donated the Fink Room to the museum. Or maybe his great-grand-daughter. In fact he's her daddy.

**Walden Karp**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 6 (-2) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 10 (+1)
**Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0 **Defense:** 1
**Toughness Save:** 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
**Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Knowledge (Popular Culture) 1 (+3), Stealth 5 (+5)
**Complications:** Cute and adorable, scared of everything
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (can't drive a car or reach things on high shelves)

**Background:** Walden Karp hates Halloween. Life is scary enough without all those monsters and skeletons and witches everywhere. Last Halloween he hid under his bed until his parents yelled at him and made him go trick-or-treating. They yell at him a lot about being scared of stuff, but it doesn't help much. And now, despite everything they said about monsters not being real, the monsters have finally come for him.

A small, thin boy with unhealthy pale skin and deep hollows under his big dark eyes, Glendon looks worried most of the time and he's on the verge of a total freak-out now. If a particularly scary-looking PC grabs him, he may well panic and try to get out of their grasp, despite the lethal drop below. It's the GM's call as to what qualifies as a

"scary-looking" hero. PCs who look like werewolves, dress like pirates or have masks that look like skulls are sure to be. He's also afraid of clowns.

**Melvin Scruggs**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 6 (-2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1)
**Cha:** 14 (+2) **Initiative:** 0 **Attack**: 0
**Defense:** 1 (+0 if caught flatfooted)
**Toughness Save:** 0 **Fortitude Save:** 0
**Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+5), Intimidate 2 (+4), Knowledge (Streetwise) 1 (+1), Stealth 2 (+3)
**Feats:** Dodge Focus
**Complications:** Cute and adorable, likes violence.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (can't drive a car or reach things on high shelves)

**Background:** A bad kid through and through, little Melvin Scruggs is always looking for some new kind of mischief and deviltry. He loves anything gross and scary and he's cheering as Rathbone and his crew shoot up the jewelry store across the street. Melvin will be totally delighted as he plummets out the window and even more pleased when a PC snatches him up and rescues him "Yahoo!" he yells in his squeaky little voice. Once they land, he will cry "Again! Again!"

**Innocent Bystanders on the Street**
One or more people may be walking past outside while the PCs are fighting Rathbone and the thugs. Here's a set of generic stats, followed by some individuals, if you need to flesh one out a little more.

**Generic Innocent Bystander**
**PL:** 0

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+2), Diplomacy 2 (+2), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 4 (+5), Profession (Any) 4 (+5), Notice 2 (+2), Sense Motive 2 (+2)

**Titus Dibble**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
**Defense:** 3 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Feats:** Endurance
**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+2), Diplomacy 2 (+2), Knowledge (Tactics) 2 (+2), Knowledge (Streetwise) 4 (+4), Profession (Construction Worker) 4 (+4), Profession (Soldier) 2 (+2), Notice 2 (+3), Sense Motive 3 (+4), Survival 3 (+4)

**Background:** An older African-American gent, skinny and ropy, with very few teeth, Titus has been homeless off and on since he came home from Vietnam in 1972.

His father was an alcoholic and could be vicious when drunk, but he was Lester's mentor and his best friend. He died while Lester was in Vietnam and there weren't very many other relatives the troubled young veteran could turn to for support. He was a mess when he got out of the Marines. Unstable and prone to drink even before he got drafted, Lester was a mass of psychological problems by the time he came home.

It's tough for him to find work, tough to focus on anything and keep his panic attacks at bay. So he drinks and uses heroin to calm himself. After thirty years of bouncing back and forth between the VA, the Men's Shelter and rehab it's unlikely he'll ever get back on his feet now. He has managed to get it together more than once, sometimes long enough to have a job and an apartment—he's even been married. But he's always slipped back into addiction and craziness, and now it's been years since he's

had one of his good spells. Somehow he misses his Pop worse and worse as time goes by.

Titus is fairly coherent today, but he's drunk and makes all Reflexes Saves at a –2. He's a kindhearted guy and he'll try to help anyone who appears to be hurt, but he's not very capable right now. If he has a panic attack, he'll start screaming and fall down in a heap.

**Chester Crawley**

**PL:** 1

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1)
**Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Feats:** Connected
**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+2), Diplomacy 2 (+2), Knowledge (Civics) 2 (+4), Knowledge (Business) 5 (+7), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 2 (+4), Profession (Banker) 4 (+5), Notice 2 (+2), Sense Motive 2 (+2)

**Background:** Formerly a bank vice-president, Chester was laid off after a merger just a few weeks ago. A stiff, arrogant man with no tolerance for people less successful than himself, he has completely failed to adjust to the news. He can't be now just another loser—people fail because they're lazy and weak. Only whiners who want a handout believe in bad luck or claim to have been unfairly treated by fate. He could never be one of them. It's unthinkable. So he hasn't been thinking about it. Every day he tells his wife that he's going off to work and wanders around downtown in a daze. Sometimes he sits in a public plaza and reads a newspaper. Sometimes he goes to the movies. But mostly he just walks and watches the faces of the strangers going by.

He'll probably try to kill himself soon, and Rathbone's attack on the jewelry store may give him the perfect opportunity. He may get too close to the line of fire intentionally or he may just stagger blindly into trouble without seeing it, but he will almost certainly need to be rescued. He won't try to rescue or help anyone else, nor would it ever occur to him to try. Strong people help themselves. If the weak get into trouble, it's their fault.

**Nora Fleeber**

**PL:** 0

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0)
**Cha:** 16 (+3)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 0
**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
**Willpower Save:** 1

**Feats:** Attractive

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+5), Diplomacy 3 (+6), Handle Animal 3 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+6), Profession (Office Worker) 4 (+5), Notice 2 (+2), Sense Motive 2 (+2), Stealth 2 (+3)

**Background:** A pretty young office worker and part-time superhero groupie, Nora is getting dangerously addicted to the thrill of hanging out around superhero battles. Any PC who makes a Notice roll vs. DC 15 will remember that they saw her in the crowd across the street from the Museum robbery in scene 3 (she's pretty enough to stand out even in a crowd that size—and she was right at the front). This is as close as she's ever gotten to an actual battle and she's as excited as she is scared at being caught in the thick of things. She's beautiful when she's scared.

Nora would very much like a big strong superhero to carry her to safety, but she won't let this completely overwhelm her sense of self-preservation. She'll do whatever the PCs tell her to, but is a little too frightened and passive to seek safety on her own. She is likely to stand there, overwhelmed with how exciting this is, until danger comes too close.

If a male PC does in fact save her she will be extremely grateful—maybe a little too much so. She'll attempt to give him her phone number and whisper to him to call her. If a PC does actually take her up on her offer of a date, they may or may not discover one additional complication. Nora is married and has a five-year-old son. Her husband, Dave, is a really nice guy and he trusts her completely. If he finds out that she's having casual flings with superheroes, it's going to destroy him, their little boy, and possibly the hero's public image once it all comes out in the newspapers (and it will).

Nora is a pale, freckled redhead with a stylish haircut. She isn't an executive—just a humble receptionist, but she dresses like one. Her taste is very good, and she knows how to stretch her limited budget for clothes.

Everyone says that Nora should be an actress or a model, because of her looks and her personality, but that always seemed like too much work to her, and anyway she doesn't know where to start. In fact she has no idea what she wants out of life—she's been drifting since she dropped out of college. Whatever she really wants, it surely isn't a swift and ugly death at the hands of the Goth Squad.

Nora really, truly loves Dave and her son, Kevin. She can't explain why she's risking her marriage and her life for cheap thrills. If she has an affair with a PC and it comes out, it will destroy her, too.

STRANGE MAGIC

# SCENE TEN:

# ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE

**Summary:** Mr. Mandrake is ready to be a god. He begins the ritual. The ceremony takes place on the wooded property of Mr. Mandrake's estate, Hell House, on an unseasonably cold evening with a hint of rain in the air. As the ceremony reaches its climax, Mr. Mandrake will sacrifice Gavin Kolchack to his obscene and unspeakable gods. He jokes that a human sacrifice isn't strictly required for the ceremony, but he's always wanted to sacrifice Mr. Kolchack to something, and this seemed like as good a time as any. In fact this isn't true. The ceremony requires the blood of someone you either love or hate, and since there is no one Mr. Mandrake loves, it will have to be Gavin Kolchack, whom he despises.

**Getting the Party Started:** One way or another, the PCs have figured out who is behind the Heart of Set's disappearance and Gavin Kolchack's kidnapping. They arrive at Theron Anton West's estate to confront him. Any number of clues could have led them here—the Lavatera flower one of the thugs was wearing at the last jewelry store robbery, Gavin Kolchack's lost article, a tip from a captured minion. Unless the PCs have a lot of elaborate preparations to make, you probably want to start this scene with them standing right at the gate.

They have arrived just in time! Mr. Mandrake is getting ready to sacrifice Gavin Kolchack in a sinister ceremony that will grant him the power of a god. Unless of course Our Heroes can defeat him, his hired mooks, the Goth Squad and a horde of shambling zombies in one action-packed slug-fest!

**Facts About Hell House**

1: Hell House sits on two hundred acres of heavily wooded land. No locked gate of any kind prevents entry onto the property. The owner doesn't mind if intruders wander onto his estate. In fact he likes it. Heh, heh, heh!

2: Security cameras, infrared and laser sensors crisscross the estate here and there. But the property is much too big to cover completely. If the Player Characters make four Notice Checks vs. DC 25 followed by four Stealth Checks vs. DC 25, they can reach the clearing or the house undetected. At the GM's discretion, a PC whose powers are derived from superhuman luck might just walk on through without having to roll at all!

3: A radar antenna sits on top of the manor house, disguised as a TV satellite dish. Mr. Mandrake uses it to detect flying objects.

4: Heavily armed security guards stand around the property here and there. Three of them are equipped with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

5: A sniper is stationed on the roof of Hell House, ready to make precision attacks on intruders.

6: Zombies drawn by the presence of the Heart of Set trickle onto the estate. Every round of combat, assume another one has reached the edge of the property from a random direction.

7: Mr. Mandrake will conduct his vile ritual at a clearing in the wooded part of the estate. See "the Final Conflict" (Page 102) for details.

8: Badmoon is wandering through the trees and will attack intruders from ambush. If the PCs make it all the way to the clearing where the ritual is taking place without encountering Badmoon, he will attack them there.

**Combat Tactics**

1: The first sign that infiltrating heroes have been discovered will be the crack of a .50 caliber sniper rifle attacking whichever non-flying character is in the lead.

2: Flying heroes will be greeting by Stinger anti-aircraft missiles unless they can mask their infrared signature. The security guards carrying the missiles do not have reloads. They have just one missile each.

3: Rathbone will have his reaction force engage the heroes as far as possible from the ritual site. He will lead his men personally.

4: At the GM's discretion, wandering zombies may attack the heroes or be drawn into a melee between attackers and defenders.

5: If alerted to the fact that the heroes are on the estate, Badmoon will use his holographic projector to set up an ambush close to the ritual site.

**Role Playing Notes:**

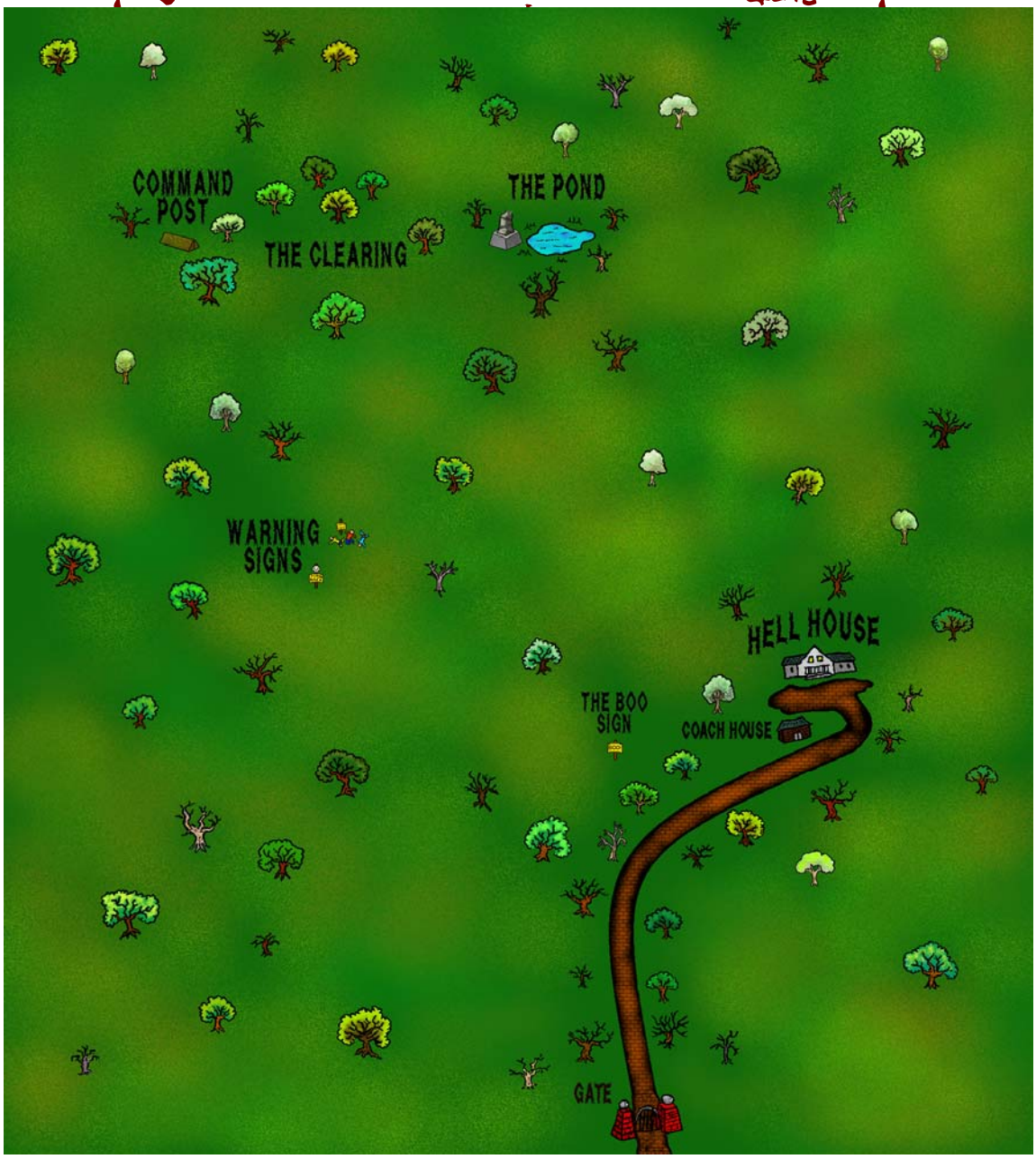
1: The number of security personnel is up to the GM based on the number of players and their power level.

2: Remember that if any members of the Goth Squad have already captured or killed then they will be absent from the climax. You may or may not want to replace them with the back-up characters from Appendix 2 (Pages 128-135).

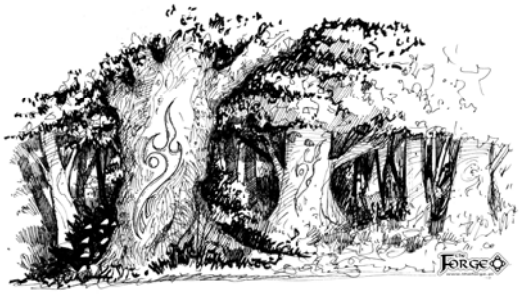
3: If Mr. Mandrake completes the ritual then his power will be increased by several orders of magnitude and he should require all players working together to defeat him. If the Player Characters all die, Mr. Mandrake will draw up stakes, leave town, learn to use his new abilities effectively and become a world class villain seeking greater and greater power.

STRANGE MAGIC

# map of the Estate



**Hell House--The Grounds**



Mr. Mandrake has clearly been reading too much Edward Gorey. He appears to live in a Nine Inch Nails video.

Most of the trees look dead, or twisted by loathsome diseases, their branches scrabbling at the sky in pain. Gray stone statues, urns and obelisks lean crookedly here and there, monuments to dubious and disturbing moments best forgotten. There is a deep, dead, scummed-over pond where it is impossible to imagine anyone ever having swum, or for that matter ever having had a pleasant stroll. In places you can almost see faces in the trees, leering at you hungrily—but never when you look straight at them. All that's missing is Trent Reznor with a glass of absinthe in his hand.

It sounds weird, too. In places there are no birds or insect noises at all. In other places they seem too loud, too frenzied—almost crazed.

Over all the gothic gloom and decay stands Hell House. Some people ask if it's really haunted, but not if they've had a good look at it. The house positively drips with supernatural ghastliness.

But the mansion itself isn't where the PCs will have their climactic battle with Mr. Mandrake. Much further back in the forest, there is a clearing, surrounded by gruesomely deformed old trees that are always green even in the middle of winter. If that doesn't let the PCs know that this is where Mr. Mandrake intends to perform his vile ritual, the giant pentagram on the ground might clue them in, or the huge statue of a demon with the head of a goat.

**The Gate**

A forbidding-looking wrought iron gate stands here between two eight-foot brick posts. Everyone who looks at the gate gets the irrational feeling that it looks like a toothed mouth, somehow. Freshly painted wooden signs on the gate read "Leave Now" and "Scary, Huh?"

The gate is Toughness 8 and the rusty iron spikes on the top will puncture anybody climbing over them who fails to make a Climb Check vs. DC 20 for 2 Damage. The posts on either side are Toughness 6 and weigh 1 ½ tons each. Each does 7 Damage if you rip it out of the ground and crush somebody with it. But you probably won't have to do any of these things. The gate is unlocked, hanging slightly open.

Make a Notice Check vs. DC 15 and you may discover a dried-up human hand clutching one of the iron bars, right at the bottom of the gate. It looks almost as though they were trying desperately to pull the gate open from the inside. There is no trace of the rest of the body.

**The Warning Signs**

A brightly painted yellow sign stands here. Someone has placed a human skull on top of it. The skull is wearing a black domino mask and reminds the PCs of someone—they can't quite say who. Oh yes, it was that vigilante, what's-his-name? The one who disappeared five years ago. The sign reads "Turn Back!"

A little further on, three corpses lie in the dirt. From their faces, it's hard to tell if they were screaming or laughing when they died. One woman, two men. All of them wear capes, hoods and/or masks. Clearly they were superheroes (no one the PCs recognize). A freshly painted yellow sign pounded into the ground next to the fallen heroes says "We Should Have Turned Back"

A third sign, next to and behind the second one, reads "Scared Yet?"

**The Boo Sign**

A new, freshly painted yellow wooden sign has been hammered into the ground here. The grass around it is pretty tall, but does not obscure the black letters. The sign reads simply "Boo!" A smiley face with a mean grin has been painted underneath.

As soon as the PCs read the "Boo" sign, something bad happens. Either the sniper on the roof opens fire or a bunch of zombies lurch out of the woods and pounce on them or Badmoon attacks. If the GM decides not to have an actual attack take place here, then one of the PCs becomes the subject of a particularly unsettling illusion. It feels as though an ice-cold hand has grabbed the back of their neck. It doesn't matter whether their neck is covered or not—even if they are wearing battle armor they can still feel the hand on their skin. Then it's gone.

**The Pond**

All the grass is dead here. A mournful statue stands nearby, its features worn away. The water looks greasy, grey and uninviting. Slime floats across the surface, troubled here and there by mysterious eddies, almost as though something big were stirring in the murk. And something is.

This pond is where Grimson presently makes his home. If a PC gets too close to that water, they might just get a nasty surprise. Let Grimson make a Notice Check if any PCs come within fifty feet of the pond. If he succeeds, he is aware of their presence and location. He'll wait until they get close, and then strike from ambush.

His first move will always be to grapple them and try to drag them down into the water. Unless of course he's in his witless state, in which case he'll just charge out of the water and attack them on dry land.

The pond is close enough to the clearing where Mr. Mandrake is conducting his ritual that Grimson can hear any efforts the PCs make to disrupt the ceremony and he will run to his boss' rescue. See "The Final Conflict" on Page 102.

If anyone thinks of picking up the statue and using it as a weapon, it's Toughness 6, weighs 1,500 pounds and does 8 Damage.

**The Command Post**

Rathbone has dug his command post halfway into the ground and set up a camouflage tent over it. He's done a good job of concealing his position. It takes a Notice Check vs. DC 25 to spot the Command Post. There are normally five men in the post, and another two or three concealed in the trees as sentries. Everyone in the post has full cover. One man is always hunched over the communications gear, monitoring the cameras and sensors that are scattered across the property. If the post comes under attack, it will take the man on communications duty a full round to take off his headphones, pick up his weapon and open fire on the PCs. Everyone else opens fire at once. Rathbone spends most of his time here when he isn't off on raids in the city. He doesn't need to sleep so he doesn't have a cot. If he or his men spot the PCs sneaking around the property, they will leave two men behind to guard the tent while they go off to intercept the intruders.

If the Player Characters manage to take over the Command Post, they can make use of the communications gear themselves. With a Knowledge (Technology) Check vs. DC 15, they can use the equipment to view through any security cameras on the property. Another Check vs. Dc 15 lets them monitor all of Mr. Mandrake's force's radio traffic.

**The Carriage House**

Directly across from Hell House proper you can find the tumbledown old carriage house. Its ivy colored brick walls are Toughness 4 (they're in rather poor repair). The big double-doors in front are Toughness 3 and are locked with a heavy padlock and chain (Toughness 8, it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick the lock). A side-door (Toughness 3, Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick its rusty old lock) leads into the same large interior room. There is just one large room inside. Some rusty old gardening tools lean up against one wall, as do some unpainted signs and some recently opened buckets of yellow and black paint (this is where Mr. Mandrake has been painting the signs the PCs can find scattered across the property). Some of the gardening tools might do as much as 3 Damage at the GM's discretion. There probably aren't any chainsaws, unless the GM really wants there to be one. The Frightmobile is parked in here, if the PCs haven't already destroyed it. Surely the PCs aren't juvenile enough to vandalize Mr. Mandrake's car?

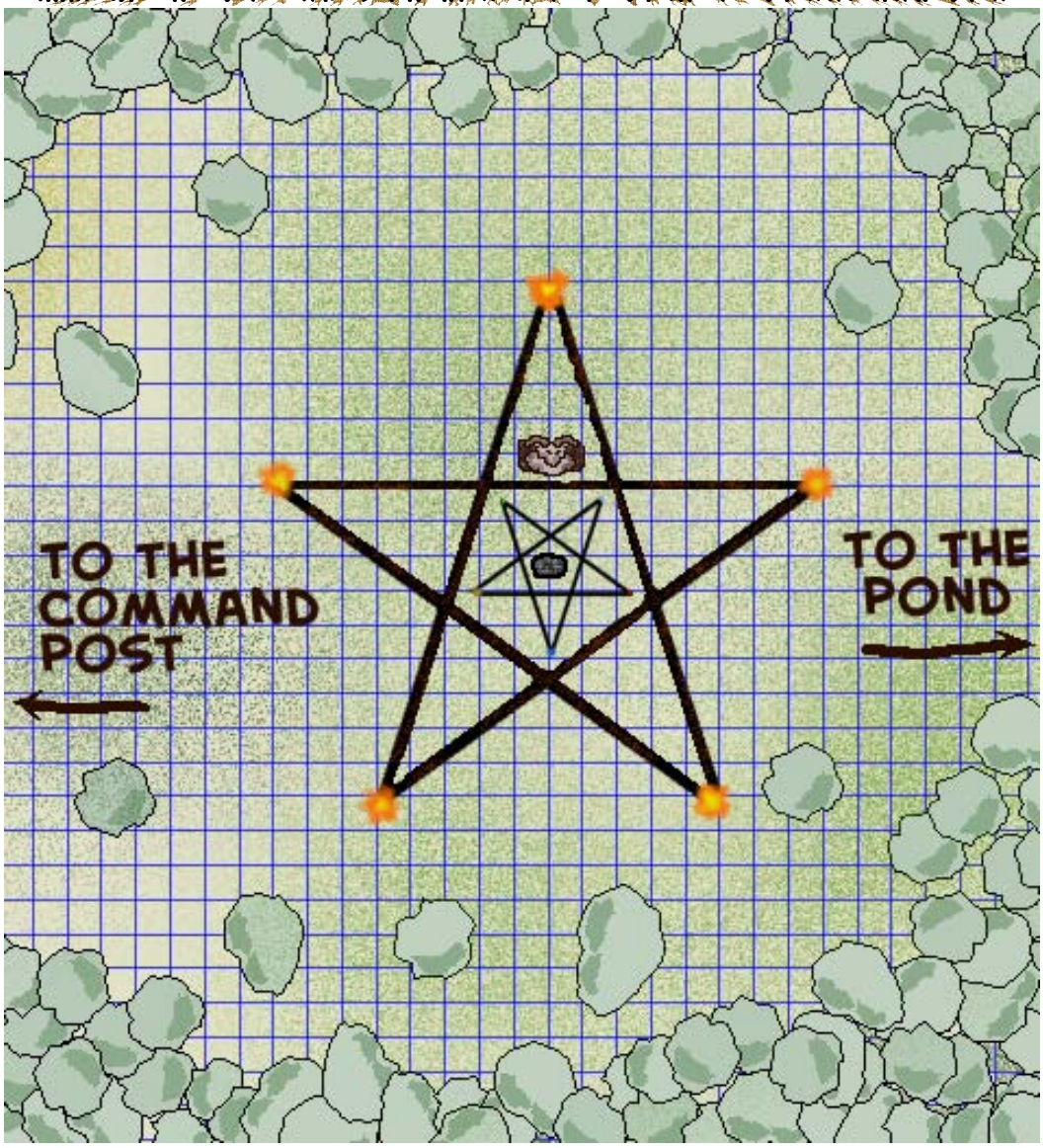
**Hell House**

The PCs don't really have much reason to go into the house itself. But in case they do it anyway, we have a complete room-by-room write-up of the house's interior in Appendix C: Horror of Hell House on pages 136-157. We didn't put it here because it's really long and probably unnecessary for this scene, so we didn't want to clutter up the text with a bunch of material that you might not even use.

**The Clearing**

This is where Mr. Mandrake intends to perform the ritual, and where the PCs will probably confront him. Go straight to the section "the Final Confrontation" on Page 102 (the next page!)

# MAP FOR THE FINAL CONFRONTATION




**The Final Confrontation**

Out in the woods, there is a large clearing where Mr. Mandrake will perform the ritual that he hopes will make him a god. Because it's that kind of story, the Player Characters will interrupt him right in the middle of it. This is where the adventure will (probably) come to its climax.

**Role-Playing Notes**

1: A huge statue of a goat-headed demon stands in the clearing.

2: Large bonfires form a pentagram around the perimeter of the clearing.

3: A large basalt altar stands in the center of the clearing.

4: The stolen gems form a second pentagram inside the bonfire pentagram. The Heart of Set rests in the center of the second pentagram.

5: Gavin Kolchack is in a drugged semi-conscious state on the altar.

6: Mr. Mandrake stands before the altar, arms raised as he begins the ritual. When the ceremony reaches its climax, he will thrust a blade into Gavin Kolchack's heart and use the blood to bathe the Heart of Set. A nightmarish demonic shape then rises out of the Heart and plunges into Mr. Mandrake, filling him with terrible power.

7: Grimson is submerged in a nearby pond and will rush to Mr. Mandrake's aid if he is attacked (see "The Pond" on Page 100).

8: Cryptic is watching the ritual from the shadows outside the clearing, taking perverse, unknowable pleasures from the sights and smells.

9: Rathbone directs security operations from a camouflaged command post within view of the ritual. He has a small reaction force of security troops with him. He is in communication with all forces on the estate, and has portable monitors in his command post that let him view the entire property.

10: The Wicked dances in a frenzy around the altar, laughing with wild delight as dark forces gather to Mr. Mandrake's call.

11: Killarina sits just outside the outer pentagram, playing with the heads of her latest victims.

**Combat Tactics for the Goth Squad**

1: Depending on which personality shows up, Grimson will defend Mr. Mandrake with all his cunning and skill or else just attack the PCs in a blind rage. It will take him a moment to get to the clearing—assume he arrives on round five.

2: Cryptic will defend Mr. Mandrake from the shadows. If the fighting goes against Mandrake's forces, Cryptic will leave for greener pastures.

3: Killarina will tear into the heroes in a virtuoso performance of killing grace, a laugh on her lips and murder-lust in her eyes. She won't bother to coordinate her tactics with any of the other villains and she won't flee even if she gets mortally wounded. If she has already killed any of the heroes, their heads will dangle from her belt.

4: The Wicked is feeling inspired tonight. He will ignore the rest of the team and focus all his efforts on overcoming a single hero (he'll pick whoever looks weakest) and forcing them into submission so he can barter for their soul. If his team starts to lose, he will feel his work here is done and will seek new souls in safer environments.

5: As mentioned above, if Badmoon is still alive, and he hasn't ambushed the PCs in the woods, he'll attack them here. Badmoon will sneak up on the PCs from the forest and try to hit one of them from behind while they're engaged in combat.

6: If Rathbone is still alive, he'll arrive in the clearing on the third round of combat. None of his men are allowed to come here, so he's come alone. Like Badmoon, he'll try to pick off a PC from behind before he makes his presence known.

7: Mr. Mandrake, like any good arch-villain, will claim to be delighted to see the Player Characters, and will make evil jokes and sardonic remarks throughout the battle. ("I haven't had so much fun since I killed and ate my little sister!") He's mostly occupied with the ritual itself, but his force-field is up and if he makes a Concentration Check vs. DC 20, he can direct magical attacks at the PCs. He won't bother until they start winning.

**The Big Finish:** How can Mr. Mandrake be stopped? James Durzic has probably told the PCs already (see Pages 64-65). The ritual will not work if the caster is incapacitated or killed. You can also wreck the ceremony by taking at least three of the five jewels out of the array, or by making off with the Heart of Set. Of course, in order to do that, you might have to incapacitate Mr. Mandrake first, so the point may be moot. Destroying three or more gems with a ranged attack might also work. Each one is small enough to have a Defense of 8 and each one has a Hardness of 12 (except for the Heart of Set itself, which is virtually indestructible—see its stats on Page 26).

Killing Gavin Kolchack won't work. Mr. Mandrake is powerful enough that all he really needs are a few drops of Mr. Kolchack's blood—it's just easier (and more satisfying) if he sacrifices him. PCs who attempt this route should get nothing out of it but bad dreams and recriminating looks from their fellow players.

If the GM wants to make things easier for the PCs, you can say that once one of the gems has been removed or destroyed, Mr. Mandrake has to make a Concentration Check vs. DC 20 every round to complete the ceremony. He'll easily make all the rolls, but it will keep him from being able to attack the PCs.

If you like, you can conclude with a big finish. Once the ceremony is completely disrupted, everything in the vicinity gets hit with a Burst Effect of 8 Damage, flattening the trees and throwing everything into disarray. This is purely optional (although it might give Mr. Mandrake good cover under which to make his escape).

**Conclusion:** Should the players defeat Mr. Mandrake, the horrors afflicting the city will cease and the zombies will fall to pieces (disappointing any PCs whose loved ones have been zombified). If it becomes publicly known that the heroes saved the city, they will become instant celebrities with all the perks and pitfalls that being famous entails. Should the heroes lose, they are most likely dead, their corpses never to be found again, their heroic deeds lost in the grave. But who knows—maybe it's made them more popular than ever!

If any members of the Goth Squad survive, some of them may want revenge on the heroes.

Cryptic will want to come looking for the PCs' loved ones. He always needs fresh meat to send to his hellish dimensions, and the friends and families of his enemies are the sweetest meat of all. Hopefully he won't be able to find any of them. If he does, he'll try to stalk and terrorize them before he moves in for the kill, which should give the PCs a good chance to figure out what's going on and move to stop him.

Rathbone will find being defeated intolerable and will put together a hit squad (of PL 4-6 thugs) to assassinate all surviving heroes, striking whenever he thinks they won't expect it. This will be a single, sudden assault, not a big long complicated plot. If he gets driven off he may well try again.

Badmoon sees his work with the Goth Squad as just another job. He doesn't take himself as seriously as Rathbone and doesn't hold grudges. That would be unprofessional. If somebody else eventually hires him to take on one or more of the PCs, he'll remember them and he'll ask how their teammates are doing before he rips into them.

Killarina is too crazy and too focused on her personal obsessions to pursue any kind of coherent vendetta against the PCs. She's not much of a plotter or a schemer. However, if any of the PCs have injured or taunted her, she will single them out the next time they meet in combat and focus all her attacks on them.

Grimson couldn't care less for the PCs or vengeance. His fishy mind is far too cold and too remote from normal human emotion for him to be capable of holding a grudge.

How the Wicked reacts depends on how the PCs treated him. If any of them were cruel to him, interrogated him roughly or mocked his claims to be the Devil, then he'll do his best to hunt them down. His best is not very good. Like Killarina, he's too crazy to hatch complicated plans. Instead he'll just sneak up on a PC some dark night and hit them from behind, or he'll try to force someone they love into signing one of his ridiculous "Contracts" (See Page 107). If on the other hand a PC treated him humanely after capturing him (particularly if they let him have his mask back) then he will stalk them from a distance, following and watching them. While this is certainly creepy, it's actually affectionate. He likes them but he doesn't know how to express it, so he follows them around.

Mr. Mandrake finds revenge tacky and gauche—he'd never admit that a pack of bungling imbeciles like the Player Characters were actually able to disrupt his evil schemes, let alone make him angry. If he manages to survive the final battle, he will claim that the whole thing was part of the plan all along, and that the PCs did exactly what he wanted them too—the fools! After he repeats this lie to himself enough times, he comes to believe it. In future, however, he will give the Player Characters and their home city a wide berth, avoiding them if at all possible.

# Appendix A: The Villains

**The Wicked**

*"I am the Devil and I have come to do the Devil's work!"*

**PL:** 10
**Real Name:** Tomas Dabney

**Str:** 18 (+4) **Dex:** 18 (+4)
**Con:** 18 (+4) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 24 (+7)
**Initiative:** 4 **Attack Bonus:** 10 Melee, 9 Ranged **Defense:**10
**Toughness Save:** 9 (10 vs. flame)
**Fortitude Save:**10 **Reflexes Save:**10
**Willpower Save:**10

**Skills:** Bluff 10 (+17), Climb 10 (+14), Acrobatics 10 (+14), Intimidate 10 (+17), Notice 5 (+8), Stealth 5 (+9)
**Feats:** Acrobatic Dodge 4, Attack Focus (Melee), Distract (linked to Bluff), Evasion, Fascinate (linked to Bluff), Improved Overrun, Startle, Takedown Attack 2
**Powers:** Blast 8 (Descriptors: Mutant Power, Flaming Breath; Flaw: No extended range), Device 1 (Flame-Resistant Costume; Effect: 1 Protection vs. flame), Device 10 ("The Devil's Stick" Pitchfork, easy to lose; Effect: Melee Weapon, 10 Damage; Power Feat: Alternate Powers [Control Emotions (Descriptor: Sonic; Extra: Area Effect; Flaw: Can only cause Fear) 10]), Leaping 10, Mind Reading 10 (Flaw: Can only read negative, wicked, shameful thoughts), Protection 5, Super-Senses 1 (Low Light Vision)
**Equipment:** Smoke Bombs (Visual Obscure 5)
**Complications:** Believes that he is the Devil. His bright red skin is all but impossible to conceal and immediately marks him as not completely human.

**Background:** Tomas Dabny was evil and going to Hell. His mother took every opportunity to remind him of this fact. His father, on the other hand, reminded him with the lash of a leather belt every night before bed. His parents were sure that Tomas was the spawn of the Devil and lamented being cursed with such an offspring.

Tomas was born a mutant and his fundamentalist Christian parents believed that he was a curse from Satan. His powers manifested at a very early age and the slightly reddish tint of his skin really did not help Tomas in the least. The constant mental and physical abuse Tomas had to endure finally drove him over the edge.

Tomas had come to believe that he was the Devil. Surely, the incessant attacks by his parents were justified by his wickedness. He was put into this suburban hell for falling out of grace with GOD. The curse of mortal flesh was placed on him for stirring rebellion in Heaven.

As the years rolled by, Tomas continued to develop new abilities. The voices that he had been hearing in his head for as long as he could remember suddenly came into focus. He realized that he could read minds. No one's wicked thoughts or shameful secret desires could be hidden from him now.

Then Tomas killed his parents. How could such self-righteous hypocrites pass judgment on him? His father's thoughts revealed that he was addicted to gay pornography and that Tomas' mother was having sex with the postman. The sharp edge of a butcher knife sent them howling down to hell where they belonged.

Tomas used his abilities to blackmail people in positions of power. The money he gained allowed him to acquire the items he required to do the work of the infernal. Tomas no longer existed; only the Wicked remained, going here and there collecting souls for everlasting torment.

He is the Devil and he has come to do the Devil's work.

**Powers:** The Wicked wears a protective, fire resistant costume resembling a cheap Halloween devil outfit. He carries a technological pitchfork he calls affectionately, the Devil's Stick. The pitchfork can emit unearthly screams of the damned that cause fear in all who hear them. The costume has hidden pockets where the Wicked keeps smoke bombs for dramatic entrances and exits.

He has the natural ability to breathe fire, read minds (evil thoughts and shameful desires only) and leap great distances. He also has uncanny persuasive abilities, bordering on the superhuman.

**Roleplaying Note:** If The Wicked has defeated an opponent, he will offer them the option to save their life by selling their soul to him. He will do this even when he's under fire, even in the most chaotic melee. The Wicked carries contracts with him for this purpose. He will insist they be signed in blood.

**Badmoon**

*"Hey little girl, don't you know it's not safe to go into the woods alone? (heh-heh-heh!)"*

**PL:** 10
**Real Name:** Tyson Stone

**Str:** 22 (+6) **Dex:** 18 (+4 ) **Con:** 22 (+6 )
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 8 **Attack Bonus:** 10
**Defense:** 12 **Toughness Save**: 8 (6 if he is caught flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 10
**Reflexes Save:** 10 **Willpower Save:** 8

**Skills:** Acrobatics 10 (+14), Bluff 8 (+9), Climb 8 (+14), Disable Device 7 (+11), Intimidate 12 (+13), Knowledge (Streetwise) 7 (+9), Knowledge (Tactics) 8 (+10), Notice 10 (+14), Search 12 (+14), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 12 (+16)
**Feats:** Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Assessment, Defensive Roll 2, Distract (linked to Intimidate), Endurance, Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 3, Improved Initiative, Rage, Sneak Attack, Startle, Taunt
**Powers:** Datalink 3, Illusion 5 (Visual and Auditory; Power Feats: Alternate Powers: Concealment [Visual Only; Flaw: Blending]; Extra: Action [can maintain an interactive illusion as a free action]) Leaping 2, Regeneration 10 (can make a Recovery Check if Injured or Disabled once per round), Strike 2 (Power Feat: Mighty), Super-Senses 7 (Acute Hearing, Extended Hearing, Infravision, Low-Light Vision, Radio, Scent, Ultra Hearing)
**Equipment:** Huge Machine Pistol (5 Damage Ranged Weapon; Extra: Autofire)
**Complications:** Has difficulty holding back his animalistic impulses.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (color-blind)

**Background:** Tyson Stone had the world by the fingertips. He had the perfect job, allowing him to travel all over the world, meet new people and kill them. The perks were fantastic, high pay, more girls than he could ever want and notoriety within the International Hitman's Association (known as IHA for short). Stone was named killer of the year three years running by the IHA and was a keynote speaker for criminal organizations the world over. A rising superstar in the cartel's Human Liability Disposal Unit, his exploits were discussed from Bogotá to Moscow.

While on vacation in Italy, Stone received his next work assignment. He was to dispose of one Emil Battenhousen, who had become a liability to the Cartel. A quick trip to the Romanian backcountry brought Stone to a run-down seventeenth century mansion, very much the picture of a haunted house. There appeared to be no guards, no security system, no household staff—a boring pushover despite its spooky atmosphere. What Mr. Stone didn't know was his target was the infamous Dr. Creep.

Sneaking into the manor at night, Stone stalked his quarry down the darkened hallways of the mansion. Without warning, he found himself surrounded by dozens of

munchkin-like creatures wearing hooded black robes followed by a man dressed like a doctor in glossy black surgical scrubs. The surgeon said “take him alive, my children, and we’ll do funny things to his tender parts. Let’s make him into, I dunno, a bionic werewolf or something” and the world went black for Tyson Stone.

The unwanted surgery Stone received that night turned him into something far more than human. And yet also something less.

Stone is now a cybernetic werewolf—a lycanthrope with bionic implants. He doesn’t have any of the usual weaknesses associated with lycanthropy. Silver and wolfsbane have no particular effect on him. In fact it’s hard to say what you would do to stop him. Dr. Creep had ample cause to regret this.

These days Stone is in business for himself. With his new powers, he’s moved up to a new class of client who can pay him bigger fees. For the past few years he’s hired out his services to the world’s darkest forces, assisting arch-villains and sinister secret societies for huge sums of money. But he has largely given up the high life. After the things he’s seen, it all feels kind of hollow to him. His money piles up in his secret Swiss accounts, unspent. His yacht sits at anchor, unused. The party girls wonder where he has gone.

**Powers:** Stone has the ability to transform into a seven-foot tall humanoid wolf. He also has a lot of cybernetic implants, including a targeting matrix overlay; diamond impregnated retractable claws, hyper-reinforced dermal plating, a computer interface jack, infrared tracking, electronic jamming capabilities, a holographic field generator (blurs image for defense and camouflage purposes) and biosynthetic musculature, which allow incredible leaps and superhuman feats of strength. Stone’s supernatural regenerative abilities are enhanced by self-repair nanobots that flow through his veins. A microcomputer that is linked to his spine regulates all of his cybernetic upgrades and can surge his adrenaline system for bursts of superhuman speed.

**Personality:** The transformation has left Stone a wild man hard to control. Although the microcomputer embedded in his spine tries to control his animalistic urges, the lycanthropic changes in his DNA are too strong. He’s terrible at resisting his impulses when he’s in wolf form. This troubles him—he had always prided himself on his self-discipline.

People who meet Tyson Stone in his human form are usually surprised by how laid back and funny he is. Nothing seems to rile him or spoil his good mood. He’ll chuckle when you insult him, laugh when you beat on him and keep telling jokes as he rips you apart. In fact his confidence and his sense of humor were a big part of what made him such a sought-after speaker at hit-man conventions. It also helps make him popular with arch-villains, many of whom are lonely men in need of a cheerful drinking buddy.

But just because he’s laid back doesn’t mean he has a conscience. Tyson Stone has killed women, kids, old people and anyone else he was hired to murder. He won’t blink at mowing down civilians. In fact he sort of likes it. Yet even though he has a hard time resisting his blood-lust, he’s not a kill-crazy lunatic like Rathbone or Killarina. It’s all about getting the mission done, as far as he’s concerned, not racking up corpses for its own sake. The body count is a fringe benefit, sure—who doesn’t like killing people? But it’s never his main objective. Unless he’s in a frenzy. Or he’s decided to blow off some steam.

Disheveled and scruffy, he looks sort of wolfish even when he’s human. His scary, hungry grin contributes a lot to the effect.

**Cryptic**

"..."

**PL:** 10

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 30 (+10)
**Int:** 16 (+3) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 4 **Attack Bonus**: 10
**Defense:** 10 (4 if caught Flatfooted)
**Toughness Save:** 10 **Fortitude Save:** 10
**Reflexes Save:** 10 **Willpower Save:** 10

**Skills:** Intimidate 14 (+16), Knowledge (Arcane Lore), Notice 9 (+14), Search 5 (+10), Stealth 12 (+16)
**Feats:** Distract (linked to Intimidate), Dodge Focus 6, Fascinate (linked to Intimidate), Fearless, Fearsome Presence 3, Minions 10 (Up to twenty 30-point Homunculi, stored in the Dimensional Pocket in his coat. See their stats at the bottom of this listing), Second Chance (Resisting the effects of Mind Control), Startle, Uncanny Dodge.
**Powers:** Comprehend 1 (Languages), Concealment 2 (Visual, auditory; Flaw: Only works in shadows), ESP 6 (Power Feat: Subtle; Flaw: Medium [he sees through the eyes and hears through the ears of vermin, so he can only use this power to perceive things that rats, roaches or other vermin perceive]), Device (Fiendish Overcoat, Hard to Lose; Effect: Blast 10 [Descriptor: flying knives, hatchets and other blades]; Power Feats: Alternate Powers [Hangman's Noose (Effect: Snare 10; Power Feat: Tether), Acid-Filled Jack-o-Lanterns (Effect: Corrosion 5; Extra: Explosion), Dimensional Pocket, Wave of Bats (Effect: Visual Obscure)]), Immunity 10 (Aging, Life Support), Strike (Limitless supply of knives) 5 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Senses 6 (Accurate Hearing, Danger Sense, Darkvison, Detect Fear), Teleport 3 (Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy; Flaw: Can't transport any living creature with him)
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (Mute)

**Cryptic's Homunculi**
**PL:** 2 (Minions, Constructs)

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** n/a **Int:** n/a
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** n/a
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 2
**Defense:** 10 (4 if caught Flatfooted)
**Toughness Save:** 10 **Fortitude Save:** 10
**Reflexes Save:** 10 **Willpower Save:** 10

**Skills:** Acrobatics 5 (+8), Climb 7 (+9), Notice 7 (+9), Search 7 (+9), Stealth 6 (+15)
**Feats:** Fast Overrun, Fearsome Presence 2, Sneak Attack 2
**Powers:** Immune to all Fortitude effects, Shrinking 8 (Size: Tiny; Move: 20 Feet per round; Flaw: Permanent), Strike 3 (total Damage: 2), Super-Senses 4 (Darkvision, Scent, Track)

**Background:** The being called Cryptic is shrouded in mystery. He appears to be immortal, seemingly appearing out of nowhere throughout history to commit foul deeds and then vanish without a trace.

Cryptic never utters a word and moves with unearthly silence. There is speculation that he is the legendary "Boogeyman" that mothers worn their children about. In fact, many disappearances of children have been linked to Cryptic. What is he, really? What does he want? Not even Mr. Mandrake really knows.

**Powers:** Cryptic is the living embodiment of things that go bump in the night. Cryptic cannot be seen as long as he stands in a shadow. He has the ability to look through the eyes and hear through the ears of vermin. He uses this last power chiefly to spy on potential victims.

His overcoat holds endless implements of mayhem. This includes the Hangman's Noose, (used to snare victims), tiny scuttling homunculi to bite and chew them, waves of bats to obscure vision and cause distractions, demonic toy soldiers that fire poison tipped projectiles, jack o' lanterns filled with acid and cruel blades of all varieties that hack and chop on their own, as if wielded by an unseen hand. Pockets in Cryptic's coat lead to all sorts of hellish dimensions, where he sends the people he abducts to be tormented for all eternity.

**Personality:** Does he even have one? In fact he does, and it's really unpleasant. When he's stalking helpless victims he is despicably cruel. Despite the way he never shows emotion he clearly takes delight in terrifying, mutilating and killing them. Otherwise he couldn't be so inventive about it.

Cryptic is considerably more cautious and calculating when he's fighting someone who might be able to hit back. In combat with superheroes he's stealthy and takes no risks, striking from behind and from concealment whenever possible. He's more vulnerable to physical damage than some of his comrades and he doesn't want to take needless risks. He likes hurting bystanders and he likes scaring them even more, but he won't take the time to do it if it leaves him vulnerable to an attack from a superhero.

If he's clearly overmatched, he'll quickly withdraw from the fight. Then, if possible, he'll go kill somebody the hero loves, as cruelly as he can. So keep those secret identities secret around him!

**Appearance:** It's hard to see much of his face, but you can tell that he's a white male with pale skin and unkempt sandy hair. He always appears in a black tattered overcoat, with a scarf concealing the lower half of his face. His gaze glows a baleful green and his hands are thin to the point of cadaverousness.

**Rathbone**

*"I bet you're real pretty under all that skin and meat! Let's find out!"*

**PL:** 10

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 20 (+5) **Con:** (n/a) **Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 18 (+ 4)
**Initiative:** 9 **Attack Bonus**: 10 **Defense:** 10 **Toughness Save:** 9 (5 if caught flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** n/a
**Reflexes Save:** 10
**Willpower Save:** 5 (10 vs. mental attacks)

**Skills:** Climb 6 (+8), Disable Device 5 (+7), Intimidate 10 (+14), Knowledge (Tactics) 8 (+10), Notice 7 (+10), Profession (Soldier) 7 (+9), Sense Motive 7 (+10), Survival 7 (+10)
**Feats:** Assessment, Break Weapon, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 5, Evasion 2, Far Shot, Fearless, Improved Critical (Kukri), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Precise Shot, Startle, Takedown Attack 2, Track, Ultimate Effort, Uncanny Dodge
**Powers:** Immunity 34 (Cold, all Fortitude Effects, Mind Control), Protection 5, Super-Senses 2 (Darkvision)
**Equipment:** Kukri (Melee Weapon; 5 Damage), Customized Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon; 5 Damage; Extra: Autofire), Grenades (5 Damage; Extra: Burst Effect), Missile Launcher (Ranged Weapon; 10 Damage), Smoke Grenades (Effect: Obscure 10)
**Complications:** Greedy and sadistic, will try to inflict collateral damage if at all possible and will always try to loot the battlefield for valuables.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (no sense of smell or taste, gruesome and inhuman appearance that can't be concealed and causes fear and loathing in everyone who sees him)

**Background:** Project Gravedigger was the initiated by the US Department of Defense's Occult Assets Division. The intention of the project was to reanimate the corpses of elite soldiers to fight for their country in death as they had in life. OAD alchemists had created an infusion that would bring dead tissue back to a semblance of life and OAD spellbinders had uncovered foul magic to force a spirit back into their rotten mortal shell.

Major Simon Matthews was a highly decorated soldier and a member of OP Squad 789, a National Security Agency hunter-killer team. Major Matthews was KIA on a mission to destroy a Chinese-built chemical weapons plant somewhere in the Middle East. For his distinguished service, Major Matthews was chosen to be the first subject of Project Gravedigger.

The initial phases of the project were a success. Major Matthews was bound to his mortal body and underwent extensive training to adjust to the trauma of being forced from the grave. Matthews had to relearn many of his military skills, which puzzled the project's overseers. His reanimated flesh also deteriorated faster than they had anticipated. Despite their best efforts to stabilize him with more infusions of Necromantic fluids, within six

weeks Matthews was a walking, talking skeleton.

His personality changed, too. OAD technicians found this out too late when the skeleton went on a rampage; killing everyone connected with the reanimation process and burning down the research facility. To this day no one really knows what caused his homicidal outburst. NSA speculates that they called the wrong spirit into his reanimated body—that this wasn't Simon Matthews at all, but some fiend from Hell animating his remains. Other observers note that Major Matthews always was a son-of-a-bitch.

The skeleton now known as Rathbone is motivated by greed and revenge. He craves material wealth even though he really can't benefit from it and lusts for vengeance even though it won't do him any good. He kills for money, for fun, and because he can't conceive of doing anything else.

**Appearance and Personality:** Rathbone wears a black hooded cloak, under which bandoliers stuffed with ammo and grenades crisscross his chest. He carries a kukri strapped to his "back." Rathbone has access to a large arsenal of weapons and will equip himself to match the operation. Rathbone is also fond of wearing black combat fatigues with a beret pinned to his head.

He's really quite unpleasant to be around, even for other supervillains. Not only is he a psychotic killer and a sick freak, he's extremely petty and vindictive, constantly getting into squabbles with his teammates over things like who got to watch TV last or whether or not he was entitled to the last beer (which he can't drink anyway). If he sees someone having more fun than he is, he'll try to wreck it for them. If he sees that there is some object you like, he'll want to steal it and then either break it or throw it away.

**Role-Playing Note:** Rathbone laughs maniacally whenever he attacks someone, takes damage himself, wants to inspire dread in his victims, wants to inspire courage in his teammates, finds something amusing or just feels like laughing maniacally. Sometimes he does it for no reason at all. His teammates have grown really sick of this habit, but it hasn't annoyed Mr. Mandrake enough yet to earn Rathbone a gruesome death (and yes, technically he's dead already—but you know what I mean).

Should Rathbone ever suffer a gruesome death at Mr. Mandrake's hands, he will no doubt laugh maniacally through the whole thing, annoying his long-suffering boss worse than ever.

**Grimson**

*"I'm going to send you to a deep, dark place"*

**PL: 10**

**Str:** 34/18 (+12/+4) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
**Con:** 34/18 (+12/+4) **Int:** 20/6 (+5/-2)
**Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 12/6 (+1/-2)
**Initiative:** 2 **Attack Bonus:** 8 **Defense:** 7
**Toughness Save:** 12 (10 Impervious)
**Fortitude Save:** 12/4
**Reflexes Save:** 4 **Willpower Save:** 8

**Skills:** Bluff 6 (+7), Craft (Chemical) 5 (+7), Intimidate 9 (+10), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 10 (+15), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 9 (+14), Knowledge (Technology) 9 (+14), Notice 6 (+9)
**Feats:** Environmental Adaptation (Water), Fearsome Presence 2, Startle
**Powers:** Comprehend 1 (Animals; Flaw: can only Comprehend the language of loathsome creatures from the darkest depths of the sea), Enhanced Constitution 16, Enhanced Strength 16, Immunity 3 (to Cold, Pressure and Suffocation), Impervious Toughness 10, Super-Strength 5 (Maximum Lift: 50 Tons), Super-Senses 3 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Blindsight [Sonar]), Regeneration 2 (Resurrection; Power Feat: Regrowth; Flaw: Only works if Grimson is immersed in seawater), Swimming 10
**Complications:** Smells disgusting—like body odor and rotting fish guts
**Drawbacks:** Involuntary Transformation (Frequent, Cannot resist the change; in his secondary form, Grimson is a simplemended animalistic brute—his Intelligence is 6, his Charisma is 8 and he can't use any of his skills apart from Intimidate and Notice)

**Background:** Anthony Miller was a brilliant biochemist working on an organism designed to break down the chemical compounds of crude oil to neutralize the effects of an oil spill.

A massive spill in the Gulf of Mexico provided the environment necessary for a full-scale test. While on station in the Gulf, Anthony deployed the organism and waited for signs that the test was successful. Unknown to him, his assistant had been waiting for years for a chance to create an "accident" that would eliminate him. Perhaps he was jealous of Dr. Miller's brilliance. Perhaps it was a personal grudge. Anthony was by all accounts a lousy boss, cold, demanding and sarcastic and most of his assistants had good reason to hate him.

An opportunity occurred that evening while Anthony was taking readings in the bow of the ship. A quick shove from behind sent him into the oil-soaked waters. Anthony had never learned how to swim and the warm waters of the Gulf hungrily pulled him to his doom. As the organism-infused, oily water entered his lungs, the last thought flickering through his mind was regret that he would never find out if the test had been a success.

Anthony died that night, but was shortly reborn, with a new body made from a

sludge of decomposed fish and crude oil, held together by a microscopic network of the experimental organisms he had worked so hard to perfect. His personality was a gruesome parody of his former self—all cruel, cold intelligence and callous disdain, when he could hold his intellect together at all. His new brain has been slowly unraveling and he spends more and more time in a state of slobbering animalistic imbecility, more beast than man.

At present he spends about half of his time as a calculating evil genius and the rest as a ravening monster. But his condition constantly grows worse, his lucid periods shorter. He's desperate to find a cure (at least during the periods when he still can remember how to tie his own shoelaces). Desperate enough to make an alliance of convenience with Mr. Mandrake. Unfortunately, Mr. Mandrake has decided to dislike him for petty personal reasons and isn't working on a cure.

**Powers:** Grimson is a physical powerhouse capable of incredible feats of strength and can take enormous amounts of punishment. His aquatic nature allows him to breathe underwater and swim at amazing speed. He regenerates any amount of damage given time as long as he is submerged, regrowing lost limbs and missing organs, cheating death time and again. Finally, Grimson has a primitive form of sonar that allows him to see in the dark and the depths of the ocean.

**Description:** Grimson stands seven feet tall (not quite big enough to qualify for a level of "Growth") and has a milky white complexion. His hair is stringy and green resembling seaweed and his nails are multi-colored and composed of coral. Apart from his size and odd coloration, he still looks reasonably human—someone who knew Anthony Miller would recognize his facial features. His physique ripples with muscles but he's not what you would call attractive—his body has the stink of rotting fish and slimy secretions drip from his pores.

When he's a brute, he glances around wildly, vicious and confused, ready to lash out at anything that startles him or which he doesn't understand. When his mind is functioning normally, he has a cold, dry, sarcastic wit. In fact he's a little better at making wry sardonic observations than Mr. Mandrake himself. As a result, Mr. Mandrake dislikes Grimson (he can't stand being upstaged) and avoids being in the same room with him whenever he can.

**Killarina**

*"Dance is my life—and your death!"*

**PL:** 10

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 21 (+ 5)
**Con:** 15 (+2) **Int:** 11 (+0)
**Wis:** 17 (+ 3) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
**Initiative:** 8 **Attack Bonus**: 15 (melee) 10 (Ranged) **Defense:** 13 (8 if she is caught flatfooted)
**Toughness Save:** 6 (2 if caught flatfooted)
**Fortitude Save:** 7 **Reflexes Save:** 13
**Willpower Save:** 5 (8 vs. Mental Attacks)

**Skills:** Acrobatics 12 (+17), Escape Artist 7 (+12), Intimidate 9 (+13), Notice 8 (+11), Perform (Dance) 13 (+18), Stealth 10 (+15)
**Feats:** Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (Melee) 5, Attractive, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 5, Elusive Target, Evasion, Fascinate (linked to Perform), Improved Critical (With Kama), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Move-by Action, Startle, Takedown Attack 2, Weapon Break
**Powers:** Device (Twin Kama Blades, easy to lose; Effect: Melee Weapon +3 [5 Damage total with Strength Bonus]), Mind Shield 3
**Complications:** Never uses ranged weapons, goes into a homicidal frenzy at the sound of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite")

**Background:** Allison Browning had dreamed of becoming a ballerina since she was three years old. She devoted every free moment to perfecting her art. Most of all she dreamed of starring in the Nutcracker, her favorite ballet since she could remember.

At the age of seventeen Allison tried out for lead dancer for her high school's production of the Nutcracker, confident that she would win the part. Her hopes and dreams died that day, a part of her soul collapsing into a black void of hate. For Allison was told that being built like a Sports Illustrated swimsuit model would forever prevent her from dancing ballet. The fact that she was an albino just made it worse.

Revenge was what Allison danced for from that day forward. If she could not dance for love then she would dance... for hate! A new passion filled her soul, a dance of red ruin, sharp as a razor blade.

For the next ten years she trained in private, learning terrible secret ballet techniques long banned from the art. The Plie that drove Nijinski mad, the dread Saute that crippled Suzanne Farrell and sent George Balanchine to his tormented grave. She sought out and studied under depraved masters whose names were only whispered in the darkest corridors of Modern Dance. We don't know all the paths she walked or

the prices she paid, but the very thought is enough to make the sternest Maitre de Ballet tremble.

On the ten-year anniversary of her rejection, as her former high school prepared for yet another production of the Nutcracker, Allison glided into the auditorium for a bloody new audition. The headless bodies of her old teachers bathed her in a shower of crimson, but failed to sate the burning hate. Her blood lust rising, Allison turned on the students, a graceful figure of carnage, as her blades tasted soft flesh. She killed and killed until there was no one left. In a crucible of death, Allison Browning was reborn as... Killarina!

Now she visits high school dance recitals all across the country and offers them critiques written in blood and screams.

**Appearance:** Killarina is 5'11" inches tall and is built like a swimsuit model—gorgeous, but far too curvy to be an actual ballet dancer. An albino, with translucent colorless skin, her hair is wavy, long and white, while her eyes are crimson. She wears her hair up, but it's always coming loose in places.

Killarina likes to wear leather tutus and always seems to be spattered with blood. She smears dark make-up around her eyes to create a mask-like effect. Her lips and fingernails are painted a glossy black. In each hand she holds an evil-looking Japanese weapon called a "Kama" caked with blood and grue. She wears a necklace of human ears around her graceful, swanlike neck.

**Quirks:** Killarina has a fondness for beheading her foes and keeps her favorites as trophies. Call it a weakness.

**Mr. Mandrake**

*"I haven't had so much fun since I killed and ate my little sister."*

**Real Name:** Theron Anton West
**PL:** 13

**Str:** 8 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 18 (+4)
**Int:** 24 (+7) **Wis:** 24 (+7) **Cha:** 20 (+ 5)
**Initiative:** 2 **Attack Bonus**: 12
**Defense:** 10
**Toughness Save:** 13 Impervious (2 without magical defenses)
**Fortitude Save:** 10 **Reflexes Save:** 8
**Willpower Save:** 13

**Skills:** Bluff 10 (+15), Concentrate 14 (+21), Intimidate 13 (+18), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 18 (+25), Knowledge (Business) 8 (+15), Knowledge (Civics) 8 (+15), Knowledge (History) 8 (+15), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 7 (+14), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 12 (+19), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 12 (+19), Languages (Arabic, Aztec, Chinese, German, Gothic, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Latin, Mayan, Sanskrit, Saxon, Tamil, Tibetan), Stealth 5 (+7)
**Feats:** Beginner's Luck, Jack-of-All-Trades, Master Plan, Ritualist, Well-Informed
**Powers:** ESP 13, Force Field 13 (Impervious), Immunity 4 (Disease, Starvation, Suffocation 2), Magic 13 (Effect: Blast; Power Feat [Alternate Powers: Insubstantial, Suffocation, Summoning, Telepathy, Teleport—Extra: Portal), Mind Control 13, Super-Senses (Darkvision, Detect Magic, Magical Awareness, Precognition)
**Complications:** Loves being sinister, can't resist the sound of his own voice.

**Background:** Theron was born into old money—a descendant of genuine European aristocracy. He has been raised to feel disdain for the lower classes, and it shows. But despite his narrow outlook, he is an authentic genius absorbing and has been absorbing huge amounts of knowledge since he was able to walk. By the age of eleven, Theron was attending college and by fifteen he held five different degrees. He is incredibly well versed in history, philosophy, linguistics, mathematics and economics. By the time he was eighteen, Theron held doctorates in philosophy, history and economics.

Gavin Kolchack actually went to Harvard at the same time as Theron West. He despised the obnoxious, arrogant little toad. Not because he was unpleasant, but because Kolchack himself had fought his way into Harvard with talent alone. He could not stand the idea that an odious, old-money brat like West really was his intellectual superior.

The fact that young Mr. Kolchack hated him for the wrong reasons has always amused Theron West.

Everything Theron tried his hand at he accomplished with ease. Nothing ever challenged him even slightly. As you might imagine, this increased his arrogance and narcissism to even more stratospheric levels. It also made him very bored with life. He dabbled in various crimes to relieve the

ennui. They were all far too simple, and so was evading punishment. Eventually he got around to murder, and then pushing other people into murder. Both were so easy he didn't know why he bothered.

Browsing his family's library, Theron stumbled onto a book titled Initiation into the Occult by Roland Crow. Here at last was something that could challenge his intellect and willpower—black magic. Having digested Initiation into the Occult, Theron used his vast resources to acquire esoteric tomes from all over the world. Soon only the darkest and most dangerous texts could satisfy him—terrible forbidden works that the greatest masters of the occult had all warned against. The Book of Thirteen Unspeakable Truths. The loathsome Bl'Flub-Zarno Manuscript. The dreaded Gerflugelmacht Codex of Wurztzel von Stumph—the mad cobbler of Ulm!

Theron was pleased that mastering the dark arts taxed on his abilities and resolve. And in truth, the way to magic he had chosen was exceptionally demanding. Just staying alive and sane was a constant challenge.

Nothing was too vile for Theron. He went from sacrificing animals to kidnapping people for his macabre rituals. First he preyed on the homeless, then he moved onto women who caught his eye, then to children and then to his own family.

His magical powers increased in leaps and bounds as he delved ever deeper into the universe's darkest mysteries. But something began to trouble him. This was all starting to get too easy. The faintest hint of his old boredom had begun to come back, and it terrified him. He frantically cast about for some sort of major project to occupy his faculties.

Then he stumbled upon a tome in Egypt that could transform him into a god on earth—and make lots of stupid zombies for him to order around. He supposed that might be interesting. In any case it was better than nothing.

In order to gain this power, he would have to acquire a diamond called the Heart of Set and six other flawless gems. The diamond would be difficult, he was pleased to note—no one knew where it was or who presently owned it. And it was supposed to be extremely dangerous to handle. He began to warm to the challenge...

**Powers:** One of the most powerful sorcerers on the face of the earth, Mr. Mandrake wields all the blackest powers of the Abyss. He can create blasts of Hellfire, he can stroll unhurt through the infernal dimensions, bypassing normal reality (teleporting or turning his body insubstantial). He can command the minds of weaker people, and see through walls.

While he can conjure up all sorts of unthinkable abominations he seldom bothers to rely on demonic entities to carry out his will. He's more formidable himself than almost any demon.

**Appearance and Demeanor:** He's younger than people expect him to be. He started down his dark path early and mastered the black arts much faster than most occultists. That's why he hasn't gotten around to making himself immune to aging yet. He's still nearly in his prime. Theron's hair is prematurely receding and he already has a spreading bald spot. He wears glasses and has a pleasant, mild air, even when he is doing or saying something utterly despicable. And he loves to say horrible things. A master villain of the classic mold, he delights in making pompous, sadistic speeches and generally hamming it up. But he does it all in a casual, matter-of-fact tone of voice. He never shouts.

Elegantly dressed when he isn't wearing ritual garb, his clothes cost more than most peoples' cars. He likes to point this out.

**Mr. Mandrake's Thugs**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 10 (+0)
**Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Climb 2 (+4), Disable Device 4 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Criminal) 4 (+4), Stealth 2 (+3)
**Feats:** Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire)

**Background:** Here are some stats for Mr. Mandrake's hired thugs. They normally wear bulletproof vests, black commando gear and Halloween masks. When they rob the museum, they will be wearing tuxedos over their body armor. The tuxes aren't rented and can't be traced.

Some of their masks are funny or cute, others are horrible. All are really scary while worn by psychopaths with guns.

In addition to the generic stats, we have some individual thugs listed below, just in case you need one for some reason.

**Individual Thugs**
Why should all goons be faceless nonentities? Over the course of the adventure, the GM may want to give one or more of Mr. Mandrake's thugs an individual personality and back-story, particularly if the PCs capture them. Here are some ready-made ones. You don't have to use any of them. They're just here for your convenience.

**Montana Wayne Clyburn**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
**Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 14 (+2)
**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
**Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+5), Disable Device 4 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 4 (+5), Climb 2 (+3), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+7), Medicine 4 (+5), Profession (Criminal) 4 (+6), Stealth 2 (+3)
**Feats:** Connected, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire)

**Background:** A third-generation career criminal, he's known as a gentleman to his peers. But it's not because he's kind, it's because he's polite. He grew up as one member of a sprawling clan of ne'er do-wells and thieves, who traveled the country in beat-up old campers and kept no fixed abode. His father taught him how to hunt, pick locks, cheat suckers and use a knife--all the things a man needs. By the time he was sixteen he had been sentenced as an adult for armed robbery and assault. When he got out of prison, eight years later, he had lost touch with his roving clan of relations and he's never managed to find them again. Not that this matters much to him.

Montana spends about half his time in prison, where he is wired in tight with the gangs. When he's outside, he pulls bank jobs and runs errands for organized crime. If you can name a criminal activity, he has been involved in it. That includes trying to blackmail cities with a death-ray—he's served on the personal staff of three different arch-villains.

While he loves crank, and is sure to be high when the PCs encounter him, he's one of the lucky few who can actually keep his addiction in check and uses it only to get keyed-up for a job.

He's an extremely reasonable and totally cold-blooded guy. Personable and funny, he never shows up late or drunk for a job. He's capable of getting angry or scared, but he hides it well behind his congenial smile. While he has no objection to killing people, particularly cops, he thinks it's unprofessional to do it needlessly. Then again, if the boss wants to behave like a maniac, who is he to judge?

Montana wears a mask that looks like a cute bunny. Underneath it he's a wiry middle-aged man with a white beard, sunglasses and a lot of prison tattoos. Some PCs may recognize his tattoos--he appeared in a number of porno movies back in his youth.

He will make small talk with the PCs if he's got them at gunpoint or vice-versa, chatting amiably about the weather or some funny story he heard on the radio.

**"Tiny" Merv Gimble**
**PL:** 2

**Str:** 18 (+4) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 9 (-1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2 **Defense:** 1
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 2
**Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 1

**Skills:** Climb 2 (+4), Craft (Mechanical) 4 (+3), Intimidate 5 (+7), Notice 1 (+1), Profession (Criminal) 1 (+1)
**Feats:** Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire)

**Background:** Merv's in completely over his head. He claims to be a former SAS commando, drummed out of the service for using excessive force on civilians. But in fact he's just a hulking great fan-boy, who has read one too many books about mercenaries. His mom finally kicked him out of their South London flat, and Merv went looking for a place he'd heard about on the Internet—a café in Brussels where supervillains recruit minions. Excitable, silly and dumb, wrapped up in his fantasies, it never occurred to him to wonder what would happen next, if someone actually recruited him.

Filthy Pierre took one look at this giant, grinning lout, with his scars and tattoos and his military haircut, and decided he must be for real. Merv has been scared out of his wits ever since, certain that the real criminals around him will find him out at any second. God knows what they'll do to him once they discover he's not one of them. He tries to cover up his fears by being loud, aggressive and boisterous. It makes him dangerous, eager to show how hard he is by getting tough with civilians. He wears a gruesome maniacal clown mask, fanged and grinning.

Tiny is pretty threatening, even without his mask. A veteran of countless, pointless schoolyard fights, he has a lot of scars and knows a great deal about how to bully people. His muscles come from his genetics (men in his family have always been huge) and from lifting weights in his room, but they are certainly real. You would never suspect that he's only eighteen.

**Reuben Lord**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+2 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 3 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Acrobatics 5 (+8), Climb 3 (+4), Disable Device 5 (+6), Drive 2 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5

(+5), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Soldier) 5 (+6), Stealth 2 (+4), Survival 4 (+5)
**Feats:** Acrobatic Bluff, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Quick-Draw, Track
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire)

**Background:** A pretentious thug who thinks he's James Bond, Lord has been a commando ever since he graduated from Princeton ROTC. He's a small, funny-looking man with a reedy, nasal voice and muscles like bowling balls on his slender arms. He reads Plato and Nietzsche, and he adores classical music—he once started a music appreciation society among the Green Berets. He quotes the great books a lot and thinks he is an intellectual, but his understanding of these works is shallow, unoriginal and often hilariously wrong. He wants to be a thoughtful gentleman assassin, like he's read about in comic books and cheap novels, but he's too much of a narcissist and a psychopath to be anything but a thug. He's has many things to say about the warrior's code and honoring the craft of death—all of them facile and glib. But while he claims to live by a code of honor, the moment he starts to lose a fight or doesn't get his way he forgets all about his code and throws a homicidal tantrum.

After a successful career in the US Army's Special Forces, he went into private consultancy, produced a series of exercise tapes ("The Special Forces Workout"), wrote a diet book and undertook secret missions for a few military contractors. He's done work for the CIA, he will proudly tell you (but if you knew *what* he has done for them, you'd wince away in disgust).

A tireless self-promoter, he will use any conversation as an excuse to talk about himself and his accomplishments. Many of the men he has served under have been impressed by his philosophical pretensions and his upper-class accent—working for a supervillain seemed like a natural fit.

Why would the son of a wealthy New Hampshire family want to travel the world, murdering people when he isn't boring them to death with his ideas about Hegelian Dialecticism? God only knows. He wears a mask that looks like a wailing ghost. Perhaps that's a clue?

He likes Mr. Mandrake, loves his sense of style and flair, respects his erudition. He wasn't able to resist taking one of Mr. Mandrake's prize Lavatera flowers and he wears it in his buttonhole. This may be the clue that cracks the case for the Player Characters (see pages 80 and 87). Because it's important for him to be present during scene #9, the PCs probably shouldn't have a chance to encounter and kill the insufferable Mr. Lord before then.

**Horst Ganz**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 16 (+3) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 13 (+1)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+2 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 3 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+5), Climb 3 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Disable Device 6 (+7), Drive 2 (+3), Escape Artist 3 (+4), Intimidate 6 (+7), Knowledge (Streetwise) 7 (+8), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (Criminal) 5 (+6), Stealth 3 (+4),
**Feats:** Defensive Attack, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Quick-Draw
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire)

**Background:** With his gray brush cut, bulging muscles and big ugly scars, Horst looks like a thug and he is. He's pulled bank robberies all over Germany and spent a good-sized chunk of his life in jail for it.

A lifelong criminal, he hasn't had a lot of other options. Horst was already a thief and a bullyboy when the two Germanys reunited. An Easterner, he had grown up thinking that the authorities were all a bunch of brutal, vicious criminals themselves, so why not steal from them? Especially if you're hungry. By the time of reunification, he knew no other life.

He was thinking of getting out of the life after his last bank robbery. Things went wrong, innocent people got killed. He hates it when that happens—hates killing people altogether, but especially if they're just bystanders. It made him reconsider his whole approach. Maybe it was time to grow up and go straight after all. But then his girlfriend, Suzanne, told him she was pregnant. And now of course he had to stay a thug forever, to provide for her and for their unborn son—he's sure it's going to be a son. He went to Brussels, talked to Filthy Pierre and signed up with a supervillain.

Things went well, they took down an armored car in Istanbul, nobody got hurt, the pay was good. So he signed on for a second gig, with a different master villain. Then he had the bad luck to join up with Mr. Mandrake. He's seen some bad stuff since then, but he grits his teeth and thinks of Suzie and the baby.

A relatively nice guy under his scars, tattoos and harsh German accent, he tries to look out for the younger lads on his team and teach them how to be good thugs. He has a natural talent for teaching and will probably make a good dad, if he lives long enough.

If any of his comrades get hurt he will try to give them first aid and he's willing to risk his own life to get any of them to safety. Except for Willis Roach. He hates Roach and is already on the brink of killing him.

**Willis Roach**
**PL:** 3

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 1 **Attack Bonus**: 3 **Defense:** 3
**Toughness Save:** 3 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
**Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

**Skills:** Climb 2 (+4), Disable Device 4 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Criminal) 3 (+3), Stealth 5 (+7)
**Feats:** Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Chokehold, Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw, Sneak Attack
**Equipment:** Body Armor (3 Protection), Big Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 Damage, Autofire)

**Background:** Under a smiling piggy mask lurks Willis Roach. He's a slinking, cowardly killer who loves to hurt helpless people. Roach is so beaten-down, shy and nervous with his mask off that most people have no idea how dangerous he is. But with a gun in his hand and a mask on his face, surrounded by his comrades, he's evil incarnate. He'll be looking for a chance to hurt any hostages who fall into his clutches, although he's too chicken to disobey orders. Terrible things are in store for any hostage who gets left alone with him. Roach doesn't talk much, but sometimes you can hear him muttering under his breath. Pull his mask off and you'll find a pale, pasty guy with a wispy moustache and a lot of acne scars, who can't meet your gaze even briefly. Roach has no conscience and no loyalty. If he gets captured he'll confess to all the terrible things he has seen and done in Mr. Mandrake's service in an effort to cut a deal. It's very clear that none of it bothers him. He will endlessly complain about his cuffs being too tight or the way the cops promised him a fish fillet sandwich but got him a McChicken instead, then go back to calmly describing some unspeakable atrocity in which he took part.

What makes a guy like Roach? It's hard to say. He's from suburban Indianapolis. His mother died when he was five and his father was an angry, overbearing bully, but he didn't suffer a lot of physical abuse. Yet by the time he was eight he had already been sent to juvenile hall twice for assaulting smaller children (always from behind, when they weren't looking). In juvie he learned important lessons in cruelty and crime. By the time he was eighteen he knew he wanted to be a criminal or a merc or something powerful and scary. He washed out of the Marines in boot camp and became a high-school security guard, then a drug dealer. Sometimes he broke into houses and violated the owners' personal property.

He's a self-taught marksman, spending endless hours on the pistol range while other guys dated girls or hung out with their friends. One of his drug contacts let him know about a place in Belgium where super-criminals recruited and he saved up just enough money from his security job for a ticket.

**Herve the Sniper**

**PL:** 6

**Str:** 12 (+1) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 7 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
**Toughness Save:** 6 (+1 flatfooted)
**Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
**Willpower Save:** 6

**Skills:** Climb 10 (+11), Intimidate 3 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+5), Notice 8 (+11), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+5), Stealth 7 (+11), Survival 7 (+10)

**Feats:** Accurate Attack, Defensive Roll 5, Elusive Target, Equipment 1 (5 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initiaitive 2, Sneak Attack, Track
**Equipment:** Sniper Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)

**Background:** The PCs probably won't get to know Mr. Mandrake's hired sniper as anything but a distant muzzle flash and a cracking sound. If they get close enough to make his acquaintance, here he is.

Friendly in a distant, guarded kind of way, Herve is only really comfortable when he's looking down the barrel of a rifle. He only comes alive when he's off in the woods killing people and everything else bores him. He's a real pro, treats his employers with respect and never shows up drunk, but it's all because he wants more opportunities to shoot people from a distance.

He has tried hard to overcome this failing. He drinks and parties a lot off-duty, but it gives him no joy. He dates a lot of women, but takes no pleasure in their company. He beats them, breaks down their confidence and screws up their lives because he supposes this is what one is supposed to do with girls, but even breaking a model's perfect nose gave him no real thrill. It's sad, he feels. But perhaps one day he'll find a girl who really matters enough to him or a drug that will get him high enough to match the thrill of shooting someone in the back from a great distance. In the meantime, he has acquired some scary facial tattoos just to make sure he remains unemployable and never gets tempted to take a square job, even temporarily. For he'd go insane with ennui, he's sure of it.

Herve is pretty open about his personal troubles and will explain his problems to anyone who asks, or for that matter asks about the tattoos on his face. He was trained by the French Army, but they didn't send him on enough assignments, so he left

and went to Bosnia, where there were always targets to be acquired. He worked for whichever side could feed him, and sometimes for criminal gangs. This led to more work as a private contractor in Chechnya. He's taken on assignments for the American intelligence services, and against them. He's worked in Africa and Asia and everywhere else. He doesn't really remember all the places he's worked or all the causes he's fought for, since he never paid any attention. But he can tell you exactly how many people he has killed (203) and every detail about each one. Oddly for a French assassin, he does not smoke. Herve is a little uncomfortable firing from a fixed position like the nest on Mr. Mandrake's roof. Normally he likes to move around a lot between each shot he fires. And he really hates being in such an exposed position. But his spotter is good and so is the pay and he supposes that this is better that not getting to shoot people at all.

**Arkady the Spotter**
**PL:** 6

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)
**Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
**Initiative:** 7 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
**Toughness Save:** 6 (+1 flatfooted)
**Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
**Willpower Save:** 6

**Skills:** Bluff 8 (+8), Climb 6 (+6), Concentrate 6 (+9), Diplomacy 8 (+8), Knowledge (Tactics) 5 (+7), Notice 11 (+14), Profession (Policeman) 4 (+5), Stealth 7 (+11), Survival 6 (+9)
**Feats:** Accurate Attack, Defensive Roll 5, Elusive Target, Equipment 1 (5 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initiative 2, Sneak Attack, Track
**Equipment:** Infrared Telescopic Scope (Darkvision, Infravision, Telescopic Vision), Silenced Pistol (Weapon, 3 Damage)

**Background:** A rabbity little guy with big, watery eyes, he's a Russian by birth, but he grew up in Poland, where people made him suffer for his ancestry in ways large and small throughout his life. Teachers and classmates alike tormented and persecuted him for being a dirty Russian. Soon he learned to ingratiate himself in any way possible and to constantly watch for trouble. He also started getting really interested in guns. During his service in the Polish Army (required of every young man) he showed such aptitude with firearms and such zeal for killing (and for pleasing his superiors) that they made him a sniper. But once he was in the prestigious sniper program his Russian name once again became a problem. Due to the prevailing prejudice against Russians, he was made a spotter, and never allowed to practice on heavy weapons. He excelled in his role, which suited his nervous, watchful nature well. In fact he did such a good job that when his term of service was up he joined the Polish National Police as a commando in one of their famous "GROM" units. His superiors felt that it was foolish to keep someone with his skills out of the unit just because he had the wrong last name. Yet his teammates never accepted him, despite his best efforts to ingratiate himself, and did their best to screw up his career in subtle ways. This worked. Three years later he was let go for incompetence—a completely unfair charge but one he accepted without complaint. He had never stopped trying to make friends with his teammates.

Arkady soon found work with a private security contractor in the US, where no one cared about his name. But by now his heart was permanently twisted with suppressed hate. It wasn't long before he was renting his talents out to criminals and supervillains. He always works as a spotter, despite being an amazing shot, since whenever he looks down the sight of a weapon he feels an almost uncontrollable urge to shoot every last person he sees—and then himself.

He's also great at making friends with scary, dangerous villains. He's already gotten in Herve's good graces, and that guy is a stone cold bastard.

**Zombies of the Heart of Set**

**PL:** 2

| | |
|---|---|
| **Str:** 18 (+4) | **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** n/a |
| **Int:** 2 (-4) | **Wis:** n/a **Cha:** n/a |
| **Initiative:** -1 | **Attack Bonus:** 2 |
| **Defense:** 0 | **Toughness Save:** 2 (impervious) |
| **Fortitude Save:** n/a | |
| **Reflexes Save:** 2 | **Willpower Save:** 2 |

**Feats:** Fearless, Improved Grapple
**Powers:** Immunity 31 (Critical Hits, all Fortitude Effects), Protection 2 (Impervious), Super-Senses (Darkvision), Super-Strength 4 (Flaw: Limited [does not allow the zombie to lift more than their base carrying capacity, useful only to wrestle opponents])
**Complications:** Easily distracted, really stupid, slave of whoever wields the Heart of Set.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (No sense of touch, moves only 15 feet per round)

**Background:** As you may recall from Scene 1 (Page 10) the "zombies" that people were sighting a few days ago were just illusions, designed to shake people up and scare them. Now real zombies stalk the city streets after dark, hungry for warm living flesh.

Mr. Mandrake hopes that at least some people will have already figured out that first round of zombies weren't real, and will assume that these creatures can't hurt them either. Imagine their surprise when an "illusory" zombie starts eating them! Or will they assume that this is just an illusion too and keep trying to disbelieve it as the hungry dead peel the flesh from their bones? This kind of thought keeps Mr. Mandrake warm at night.

Classic animated dead, the zombies created by the Heart of Set shamble around like sleepwalkers. Stupid, unpredictable and violent, their main objective is to find their way to the Heart of Set so that their new master can command them. However, they are prone to getting distracted along the way—they'll see some object they want to have or a person who reminds them of someone they didn't like or their hunger will get the better of them. Once they actually reach Mr. Mandrake's estate and come within the range of his voice they will grow passive, and stand around waiting for orders. Of course, the orders he gives them are likely to be "stagger around eating people."

Not fast and not that much stronger than a living person, they get dangerous in numbers. They can't feel anything, (except for hunger) but they can see, hear and taste things fairly well.

**Stinko the Clown**

**PL:** 2

| | |
|---|---|
| **Str:** 18 (+4) | **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** n/a |
| **Int:** 4 (-2) | **Wis:** n/a **Cha:** n/a |
| **Initiative:** -1 | **Attack Bonus:** 2 |
| **Defense:** 0 | **Toughness Save:** 2 (impervious) |
| **Fortitude Save:** n/a | |
| **Reflexes Save:** 2 | **Willpower Save:** 2 |

**Skills:** Profession (Clown) 2 (-2)
**Feats:** Fearless, Improved Grapple
**Powers:** Immunity 31 (Critical Hits, all Fortitude Effects), Protection 2 (Impervious), Super-Senses (Darkvision), Super-Strength 4 (Flaw: Limited [does not

allow the zombie to lift more than their base carrying capacity, useful only to wrestle opponents])
**Complications:** Easily distracted, really stupid, vaguely remembers being a clown, slave of whoever wields the Heart of Set.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (No sense of touch, moves only 15 feet per round)
**Background:** What kind of guy asks to be buried in his clown costume, with his makeup on? Stinko was a clown to the very center of his being. He hosted the Big Fun Cartoon Circus on UHF for decades and made countless appearances at birthday parties, and other such events. You can recognize him with a Knowledge (Popular Culture Check vs. DC 20). He was buried in uniform, and he's still a clown, even in death. He still wears his cracked, smeared makeup and the tattered, filthy remnants of his costume. He still chuckles and mutters scraps of his old routine ("Hey kids, isss yer ol' pal Stiiiinko th' Clown, huh-huh-hu-huh!") as he staggers down the street in his gigantic shoes. You can distract him by asking to have a balloon animal or see a magic trick, but this only works for a single Movement Action.

**Shawna and Shauna**
**PL:** 2

**Str:** 14 (+2) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** n/a
**Int:** 2 (-4) **Wis:** n/a **Cha:** n/a
**Initiative:** 0 **Attack Bonus:** 2
**Defense:** 1 **Toughness Save:** 2 (impervious) **Fortitude Save:** n/a
**Reflexes Save:** 2 **Willpower Save:** 2

**Skills:** Stealth 3 (+3)
**Feats:** Fearless, Improved Grapple
**Powers:** Immunity 31 (Critical Hits, all Fortitude Effects), Protection 2 (Impervious), Super-Senses (Darkvision), Super-Strength 4 (Flaw: Limited [does not allow the zombie to lift more than their base carrying capacity, useful only to wrestle opponents])
**Complications:** Easily distracted, really stupid, fight each other when they aren't being distracted, slaves of whoever wields the Heart of Set.
**Background:** They're twins. And they were buried in identical little pinafores after an unspeakable accident in yoga class. Eight or nine years old, they are just at the age when sisters start to fight all the time. They're fighting still. Whenever the PCs encounter them the twins are shoving at each other and growling. When they see a living, warm human being, they'll stop fighting, look straight at their new target and blurp out the words "Hi! We're twins!" and giggle (although it sounds more like a gurgle). Then they'll attack. Quick-thinking PCs may throw them a toy to distract them. This works, but only if it's the right toy. They don't much care for Barbie, but they'll fight over anything by Bratz.

**Mean Old Neighbor-Guy**
**PL:** 2

**Str:** 16 (+3) **Dex:** 6 (-2) **Con:** n/a
**Int:** 6 (-2) **Wis:** n/a **Cha:** n/a
**Initiative:** -2 **Attack Bonus:** 2
**Defense:** 0 **Toughness Save:** 2 (impervious) **Fortitude Save:** n/a
**Reflexes Save:** 2 **Willpower Save:** 2

**Skills:** Profession (Clown) 2 (-2)
**Feats:** Fearless, Improved Grapple
**Powers:** Immunity 31 (Critical Hits, all Fortitude Effects), Protection 2 (Impervious), Super-Senses (Darkvision), Super-Strength 4 (Flaw: Limited [does not allow the zombie to lift more than their base carrying capacity, useful only to wrestle opponents])
**Complications:** Easily distracted, really stupid, hates young whippersnappers, slave of whoever wields the Heart of Set.
**Background:** A sour-faced, prune-like naked old dead man. He's limping along with a walker he found somewhere, but he doesn't need it and will drop it if he sees someone he can attack. He hates anybody under the age of forty or so. "Kids!" he will snarl, muffling the words with his swollen, rotting tongue. "Get offa my lawn!" The sight of young people enrages him and nothing can distract him from pursuing and attacking them. Not even a glass of warm milk.

## Appendix B: Alternate Team Members for the Goth Squad

The Goth Squad may very well get decimated during the course of the adventure. These are not the kind of villains that Player Characters tend to treat gently. If Mr. Mandrake's team gets picked off over the course of their encounters with the PCs, you may or may not want him to replace them.

If the PCs are just barely tough enough to confront a villain like Mr. Mandrake by himself on his home ground, then reward them for killing off his henchmen ahead of time by not replacing them before the final conflict in Hell House.

If on the other hand the PCs would walk all over him, turning the final scene from a climax to an anticlimax, let him replace missing team members as he goes along from the pool of new recruits we have listed for you below. You can also use any of these substitute villains to beef up any encounter between the PCs and the Goth Squad, if the Player Characters have them overmatched.

The substitute villains vary quite a bit in strength. Their powers and origins are the usual motley mélange that you see with supervillain teams. No single common theme but creepiness unites them.

The Cusswad Man is fairly weak. The Thing From Under the Hill is fairly strong. The other two are somewhere in between. This is intentional—we want you to be able to fine-tune how much extra firepower you are putting into Mr. Mandrake's hands. Fill in the gaps with as many additional gun-toting hoodlums and slobbering zombies as you need. Filthy Pierre is always recruiting and Mr. Mandrake's funds are nearly unlimited, so he can field as many cannon-fodder minions as the scenario requires.

And zombies, of course, are cheaper still.

### The Box

*"The box wants your blood."*

**PL:** 10

**Str:** 6 (-2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 22 (+8)
**Int:** 18 (+4) **Wis:** 24 (+10) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
**Initiative:** 2 **Attack Bonus**: 8 **Defense:** 12 **Toughness Save:** 8 **Fortitude Save:** 8
**Reflexes Save:** 6 **Willpower Save:** 10 (12 vs. Mental Attacks)

**Skills:** Intimidate 15 (+19), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 9 (+13), Sense Motive 5 (+15), Stealth 9 (+11)
**Feats:** Distract (linked to Intimidate), Fascinate (linked to Intimidate), Fearless, Fearsome Presence 3, Second Chance (Willpower saves vs. Mind Control), Startle
**Powers:** Blast 10 (Power Feats: Alternate Powers [Confusion 10, Mental Blast 10,

Snare 10—Extra: Tether, Telekinesis 10]**,** Deflect 12 (all Ranged Attacks), Mind-Reading 10, Mind Shield 2, Super-Senses 3 (Darkvision, Radius Vision)
**Complications:** Acts weird and says horrible things, radiates death and fear. Can't blend into normal human society even briefly.

**Background:** This tiny little girl doesn't go anywhere without her favorite toy  The Box floats behind her everywhere, like a nightmarish cubular balloon.

The box always floats a few feet behind her—close enough that for game purposes they occupy the same square and constitute the same entity (damage inflicted on the box affects the girl and vice versa). It's full of surprises. When it opens, don't look inside. Horrors vomit out of it, with claws and tentacles less easily described appendages. Sometimes when it's feeling lazy it just shoots out deadly rays. Looking into its depths is enough to drive most people mad, but it doesn't reveal its contents often—it's more fun to kill people when they're able to scramble around and fight.

The girl doesn't seem to have a name. She never smiles and seldom speaks. When she does, she says eerie, unsettling things. It's impossible to have a normal conversation with the girl and if you read her mind you will find that it's full of crazed, scary gibberish *("The box is thirsty—can't it have a little of your juices?* Or *"The box knows what you want—you want to bleed and beg and die"*)

Many PCs may feel conflicted about striking a child. Mr. Mandrake will play on this, if he and the box ever confront the PCs together, saying "It's not a real little girl, you know. Go ahead and hit it. Only the box is real.—you won't be killing an innocent. Unless I'm lying."

But in fact he is telling the truth. There is no girl. She's a construct of the box, connected to it by a string. She's the toy, it's the child. And what kind of adult it might grow up to become, perhaps it's better not to guess.

**Powers:** The Box's powers are all focused on the object itself and on the things that come out of it. So for example it's "Deflect" is expressed within the game as claws and tentacles that shoot out of the box and bat away incoming attacks, or sickly greenish rays that shoot them down. It's "Snare" is a long, repulsive, tongue-like appendage that shoots out of the box and wraps around the target, pinning them. When it uses "Confuse" it opens up its lid and lets the target see whatever unthinkable nightmarish thing lies within.

The PCs will probably notice this and focus all their attacks on the box itself. They may even try purposely to avoid the girl. It doesn't matter either way. As mentioned above, the two are a single entity and it does not make any difference which of them you damage—it affects them both in exactly the same way, as do Drains, mental attacks and so forth.

# #$&*@!! THE CUSSWAD MAN

*"Gimmie that #$%^&!! ice cream cone, kid! Yer Granny is a @#&%&!!!"*

**Real Name:** Merle C. Murrell
**PL:** 8

**Str:** 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
**Int:** 8 (-1) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 20 (+5)
**Initiative:** 7 **Attack Bonus:** 3
**Defense:** 8
**Toughness Save:** 7 (2 flatfooted)
**Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 5
**Willpower Save:** -1 (7 vs. superpowered attempts to affect his mind)

**Skills:** Intimidate 13 (+18)
**Feats:** Defensive Roll 5, Distract (linked to Intimidate), Fascinate (linked to Intimidate) Dodge Focus +5, Improved Initiative, Sneak Attack 2, Startle

**Powers:** Mind Control 10 (Extra: Conscious; Flaw: Sense-Dependant [Target must hear and understand what he is saying]), Mind Shield 8
**Complications:** Loathsome and vile--alienates anyone who comes into contact with him even briefly, even if this puts him at a serious disadvantage.

**Background:** Vulgar and crude, lacking any kind of social skills, he's too dumb to be a nerd and too weird to be a redneck. He's a little like the worst, smelliest parts of both.

The Cusswad Man has been blessed (or cursed) with the ability to project negative emotions into other people's minds. He can't do love or bliss, just things like fear, pain, anger and nausea. It only works when he speaks, and only on people who can hear him. Whether this represents some kind of limitation on the power itself or whether he's just never figured out how to use it properly, we leave to the GM. He's never tried using his power while keeping his mouth shut, or projecting less negative emotions, nor is he ever likely to think of trying.

The Cusswad Man mostly uses his paranormal talent to intimidate people into giving him what he wants, screaming threats and filthy insults until they capitulate. His insults make no sense, but are often hilariously obscene. If you're uncomfortable swearing at your players, or if you think they would be uncomfortable with it, try putting "bleep" noises in the place of his cusswords.

In person he is truly vile. Inappropriate and irresponsible, stupid, angry and mean, he flails around like an unwashed, drunken Jim Carrey, telling witless jokes and getting too physical with people. He smells bad.

Neither #$&*@!! himself nor anyone else seems to know where he got his powers. He can only remember about the last five years of his life. Not because his brain has

been erased, but because he's really stupid. He was a foster child—he's pretty sure, and was traded around a lot from family to family (in Arkansas, although #$&*@!! doesn't know the state's name and couldn't find it on a map). He thinks adults must have done some awful stuff to him as a kid, because he hates everybody, but he can't actually remember anything before his mid-adolescence. The first he can clearly recall (just after he dropped out of high school) he already had his powers, although back then they weren't as strong and he only seemed to be able to use them when people picked on him hard enough to get him really mad. Now he can use them whenever he pleases, which is a lot better. He can just barely read, so he must have been to first grade at some point, he thinks.

The truth is that he bargained for his powers with the Devil at the crossroads. One day he skipped school to go spit on cars from an overpass. Actually he did that on a lot of days, but this particular day was special. Overpasses are funny places—crossroads where the roads don't actually meet. Strange things happen on overpasses.

A gentleman who called himself "Nick Slick" approached the future Cusswad Man (then a mere Cusswad Boy) and offered him one wish, whatever he wanted. Merle's reply was so garbled that it was hard for even Nick Slick to distangle it, but it seemed to be something like "I @#$%! want for ever-#$%&-body to do what I @!#$*!! say!"

His wish was granted, and then he yelled "Now gimmie them @!#$*%!! shoes!!!"

Old Nick Slick laughed and gave Merle his shoes. The Cusswad man has walked in the Devil's loafers ever since.

It hasn't occurred to #$*@!! that he could use his powers to influence politics, take over a multinational corporation or date a pop star. Instead he wanders around at random, stealing food and video game money, getting people to give him their beer. It might cross his mind to rob a bank now and again, but he rarely thinks in such exalted terms.

Nobody's idea of an honorable fighter, the Cusswad Man is nonetheless too dumb to be a coward and will fight on long after things are hopeless (he doesn't much mind going to jail—or at least can't think that far ahead). He'll attack anyone, no matter what the odds. While he won't exactly take hostages, he'll do his best to clutter up the battlefield with mind-controlled innocents and he has absolutely no compunctions about putting them in harm's way.

#$&*@!! has no friends but doesn't seem to care. Perhaps some other villain might make the mistake of teaming up with him, but they'll soon regret it—he's a hopelessly disloyal and irresponsible partner.

Ironically, he is himself now under a mental compulsion to do anything Mr. Mandrake or his teammates tell him to. So far they have been just barely able to steer him away from trouble on missions. If he ever gets left on his own without clear and specific instructions from Mr. Mandrake, he'll start wandering around causing havoc again.

**The Thing From Under the Hill**

*"Uuuuuuuuunnnnhh!"*

**Str:** 34 (+12) **Dex:** 10 (+0)
**Con:** 34 (+12) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 18 (+4)
**Cha:** 18 (+4) **Initiative:** 0
**Attack Bonus**: 10 **Defense:** 10
**Toughness Save:** 12 (6 Impervious)
**Fortitude Save:** 10 **Reflexes Save:** 8
**Willpower Save:** 8

**Skills:** Intimidate 10 (+14), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Notice 5 (+9),
**Feats:** All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Fearless, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grapple, Power Attack, Startle
**Powers:** Enhanced Strength 10, Impervious Toughness 6, Immunity 4 (Aging, Disease, Suffocation 2), Regeneration (Recovers from being Injured, Staggered or Disabled in one round; Extras: Resurrection, Regrowth), Super-Senses (Low-light Vision) 1, Super-Strength 8
**Complications:** Constantly craves blood and daytime television dramas. Really lazy.
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (Mute)

**Background:** It lives for blood and soap operas. Mr. Mandrake dug it out of a hill in Texas, where it had lain dreaming for eons. The inhabitants of the nearby town of Ash Home woke it up by mistake a hundred years ago, and ever since they had to placate it with the blood of thirteen innocents every thirteen months (Gavin Kolchack once wrote an article about this; see Page 16 and Pages 18-19). As they years rolled by they came to worship it as a god, although it's hard to see why they couldn't find a better deity to pray to—or just move away. Perhaps their nightly dream-visits from the Thing Under the Hill were the only interesting thing that ever happened to them.

Regardless, the Thing never answered any of their prayers and never asked for anything but blood.

Mr. Mandrake heard of the Thing, and it seemed to him that its current owners weren't doing anything worthwhile with it, so he paid a visit to Ash Home, Texas and took it off their hands. He also relieved them of their lives and of some other occult artifacts they had lying around. He was amused to note that Gavin Kolchack was in the vicinity, looking into the very same matter. He was less amused when his old nemesis wrote an article accusing him of having killed the town elders and looted their treasures (see pages 18-19). He took some pleasure in suing Kolchack and his employers. And of course he had the Thing.

For its part, the Thing From Under the Hill had been used to a slothful existence, dreaming in the dark and drinking the occasional innocent. Once it moved onto Mr. Mandrake's couch it became thoroughly addicted to soap operas and has done little but slurp down blood and daytime TV. This may not be a new vice—Mr. Mandrake has come to suspect that it was downloading the latest episodes of its favorite shows out of the sleeping brains of its worshippers in Ash Home.

Although the Thing has lived for incalculable ages, it doesn't know any interesting secrets or incredible lost occult wisdom. It spent most of its long, pointless life asleep, and anyway has never cared about much of anything except gratifying its unclean hungers.

If the GM needs an extra team member for the Goth Squad, then Mr. Mandrake has launched a cunning scheme to get some work out of his repulsive houseguest. He has hidden the remote, denying the Thing its soap operas until it does his bidding. Worse, he has left the TV switched onto a religious channel, which the Thing loathes, because it doesn't have any money to send in. It hates him for this, but dares not kill him, for it does not know how to operate the remote itself.

If the GM doesn't need an extra member for the Goth Squad, then the Thing may still be sitting on Mr. Mandrake's couch, slowly growing into the fabric, ready to attack the PCs when they distract it from its shows (see Page 141) or else he may have kicked it out of his house altogether.

The Thing is a maniacally determined combatant, although it can be distracted from its target if someone thinks to throw it a copy of Soap Opera Digest, or offers to tell it what has been happening on Days of Our Lives. It never retreats unless ordered to, and always takes the shortest path to its target, smashing through anything in the way. Not because it's incredibly savage, but because it's unspeakably lazy and wants to get back to the couch as soon as possible.

**Powers:** The Thing From Under the Hill is blessed with the power to hit stuff until it breaks or falls down or both. Of course, so are you and I, but the Thing can do it to much bigger stuff.

A classic Powerhouse, what really sets it apart is its regeneration ability. It recovers from damage so fast that it can bounce back from being Disabled in just a round or two. Like any good horror movie villain, it just keeps coming and coming, long after you think you've defeated it and the credits are about to roll. This makes the Thing a little careless of its own safety—that and its incredible laziness.

**The Night Raven**

*"I'm not a chicken, damnit! I'm a condor! I mean a raven."*

**PL:** 10

**Str:** 14/18 (+2/+4) **Dex:** 14/22 (+2/+6)
**Con:** 16 (+3) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0)
**Cha:** 10 (+0) **Initiative:** 9
**Attack Bonus**: 15 (Melee) 10 (Ranged)
**Defense:** 13 (8 if he is caught flatfooted)
**Toughness Save:** 10 (6 if caught flatfooted, 3 if caught flatfooted without armor)
**Fortitude Save:** 7 **Reflexes Save:** 13
**Willpower Save:** 2 (8 vs. Mental Attacks)

**Skills:** Acrobatics 12 (+17), Craft (Mechanical) 3 (+3), Escape Artist 7 (+12), Gather Information 1 (+1), Knowledge (Streetwise) 3 (+3), Notice 8 (+11)
**Feats:** Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Attack Focus (Melee) 5, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 5, Elusive Target, Evasion 2, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action, Takedown Attack 2,

**Powers:** Device (Flying Condor Suit, hard to lose; Effects: Enhanced Dexterity 8, Enhanced Strength 4, Flight 5, Mind Shield 6, Protection 3 [Impervious], Strike 2 [Extra: Mighty])

**Background:** People might take the Night Raven a lot more seriously if his costume didn't look so much like a chicken. Then again, perhaps not.

He's still getting used to the name "Night Raven". Most of the time he's Captain Condor. He just came up with the other name and his scary new supernatural back-story so Mr. Mandrake would hire him.

Widely thought of as a joke by superheroes and villains alike, he's struggled hard to find work as a costumed criminal and even harder to find respect. His high-strung, foolhardy, self-important personality doesn't help.

Captain Condor's origin story has changed a lot over time. He used to claim that he was bitten by a radioactive condor. Then when people made fun of him for this he said he was an ornithologist whose jealous colleagues refused to accept his radical theories about the Red-Breasted Piping Plover and turned to a life of crime. These days he says that he is the reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian warrior-priest, who worshipped the condor god. This actually makes even less sense than the one about the radioactive condor but he stubbornly sticks to it. Except that he's changed it to the raven god, because that's spookier and more in keeping with the Goth Squad.

Now that Mr. Mandrake has actually brought him on board, he's really starting to regret it. Captain Condor has had to work with some evil guys before, but these guys are a whole lot more evil than he was counting on. If he gets out of this gig with his skin intact, he may decide to become a born-again-Christian, just to make sure there's no lingering stain on his soul.

Out of all Mr. Mandrake's henchmen, he's the one who is most likely to betray the boss. In fact, if you're at a loss for a way to get the PCs to Mr. Mandrake's lair, the Night

Raven can seek them out and offer to sell his boss out—not for money, which would be against his Condor Code. Err... his raven code, that is. But because it seems like the right thing to do.

**Appearance and Demeanor:** A muscle-bound thug who dresses up like a chicken (no, wait, I mean a condor—or is it a raven?) His brightly colored suit does not look very raven-like (but then again it doesn't look much like a condor, either)

When he's not wearing the suit you can see that he has a mullet and a big gap between his front teeth. He dresses with expensive bad taste. $500 silk shirts in garish colors, heavy gold chains, etc. His spiky mullet somehow makes him look even more like a chicken, as does his weak chin and beaky nose.

He loves being a villain and tries to rant like one, but whenever he comes up with some pompous long-winded speech his lack of education shows. He doesn't really know enough about birds to have ever been an ornithologist, nor does he know enough about Egypt to have lived there in another incarnation. It seems likely that he in fact acquired his incredible suit by stealing it. But that begs the question of who would build a flying suit that looks like a chicken in the first place.

Stubborn, bull-headed and foolishly determined, he has read a lot of self-help books and believes everything the say about not letting obstacles stand in your way. He will keep fighting after a battle is lost, he will refuse to flee when his team retreats. A bit like a rooster, actually. Yet his courage sometimes abruptly fails him. He routinely gets himself into trouble with his big mouth and then has to run for his life.

He's not casually murderous. In fact he's prone to sudden, impulsive, sentimental acts of kindness. But if he gets frustrated or scared he's capable of any stupid, vicious atrocity. If he kills a hostage or an innocent bystander, he'll feel really bad about it until he gets distracted by something else.

A manic depressive, he lapses into long periods of gloom between jobs. But when he's working on a heist he's cheerful, wildly enthusiastic and fun to be around (so say a number of his ex-girlfriends). Hitting girls is against his "Condor Code." He absolutely won't hit women unless he's really mad or really scared or lashing out in a fit of drunken depression.

# Appendix C: Horror of Hell House

The climax of this adventure takes place outside, in the woods. There is no real reason for the PCs to venture inside Hell House itself. But of course some PCs will. For those that do, here is a complete description of all the grisly, nightmarish terrors that await them. We'll start with the house's stats.

## HELL-HOUSE

**Size:** Colossal (including grounds)
**Toughness:** 5 **Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 22 (+6)
**Willpower Save:** 6 (10 vs. Psychic attack)
**Features:** Communications, Computer (sort of—the House itself is sentient and malign, with an Int of 14 and a Wis of 22), Concealment, Garage (separate from the main building), Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Powers (Illusion 10 [see individual room descriptions for the sinister illusions Hell House is capable of creating], Mental Blast 12 [Flaw: Limited—can only be used on characters who have psychically attacked it within the past five rounds], Mind Shield 4, Nauseate 10 12 [Flaw: Limited—can only be used on characters who have psychically attacked it within the past five rounds], Snare 10 [only works in one room—see "The Hall at the Top of the Stairs" on Page 147 for details], Regenerate 3 [Effect: Recover from damage in one minute; Extra: Regrowth], Super-Senses 4 [Danger Sense, Blindsight: Radar], Telekinesis 10 [Flaw: Limited—can only be used in a few rooms for a few specific, limited tasks, as defined

under the individual room descriptions], Teleport 4 [Extra: Portal; Flaw: Limited—Only works between certain rooms and doorways), Security System, Workshop

**Description:** A wide, low, scary-looking mansion, as atmospherically dilapidated as any evil sorcerer could wish. Its paint is peeling, its roof looks unsound. The windows bear a disturbing resemblance to eyes and the pillared front porch looks like a grinning, crooked-toothed mouth.

Anyone with Cosmic Awareness or Precognition who tries to get a reading on the house comes away with the same simple message "It doesn't like you."

And it doesn't. Sentient and malign, the house is extremely petty and vindictive in its likes and dislikes (it's also kind of old-fashioned and narrow-minded) and it has decided not to like the PCs.

You might think that Hell House would resent what poor care Mr. Mandrake takes of it, but in fact the house likes being run-down, dilapidated and scary-looking. Anyway it only became sentient after it had already fallen into disrepair—it didn't become alive until it began to die.

Quite a few people have met their deaths inside. If the PCs venture within its doors, they will be taking this risk for nothing. Mr. Mandrake and his Goth Squad aren't here—they're off in the woods. There is valuable information you can find in here, but a trip to Hell House is mostly a frightening, dangerous detour.

Inside, doors sometimes shut or open on their own. Empty rooms may suddenly turn on all their lights—or turn them off. If you listen at any of the house's interior walls, you can faintly hear its heart beat.
If anyone ever actually dies in the house, all its clocks begin to chime at once, and slowly the sound of their chiming turns into deep, low, hideous laughter.

**Exorcising Hell House**
This is not as good an idea as it sounds. Hell House's Willpower Save vs. psychic attacks (including efforts to exorcise it) is 10. It can only use its Mental Blast and Nauseate powers (Both PL 10) on opponents who have mentally attacked it within the past five rounds (see the House's stat-block above). It will use these powers vigorously on anyone who affronts it that way.

## WHAT IF MR. MANDRAKE DIES?

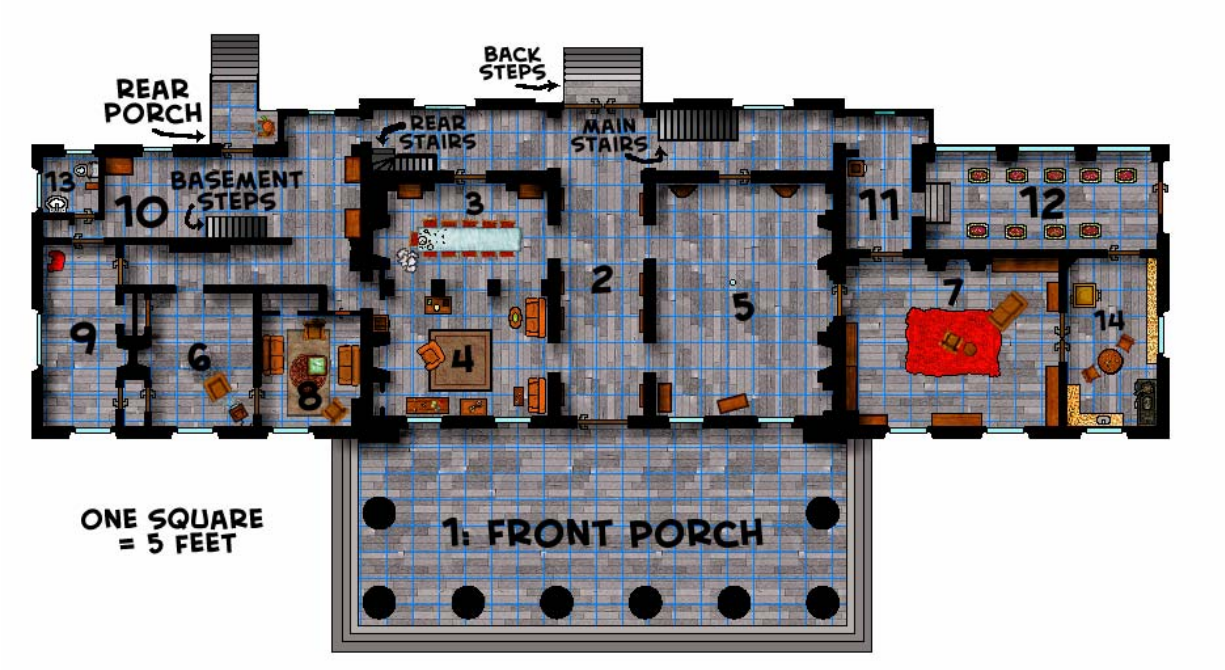
If the PCs have already killed Mr. Mandrake by the time they invade his home, Hell House is robbed of exactly none of its power. It is not dependant on Mr. Mandrake and it will survive just fine without him (although it will miss him and mourn for him—making it the only sentient being in existence who would regret the fact that he is gone). He woke it up, but it's awake now and it will stay awake until it gets destroyed.

The house won't be vengeful or more deadly than usual if the person who killed Mr. Mandrake enters it. It will be in a foul mood, but it has no way of knowing who actually killed its master, so it can't target an individual PC for revenge. Anyway its foul moods are nearly indistinguishable from its fine moods. It will do its very best to terrorize and then kill you no matter which side of the bed it got up on this morning. It won't be any more dangerous if it's feeling heartbroken.

If for some reason a PC winds up killing Mr. Mandrake while he is actually inside Hell House, then the house will of course know who killed its beloved owner and it will certainly feel annoyed with them. However, the tricks it has available to play on them are the same as they are for anyone else. Its capacities are actually pretty limited and pretty specific. And since it was going to use them all anyway, from the PCs' point of view it may not actually make much difference.

STRANGE MAGIC

# HELL HOUSE




## SECOND FLOOR

**1: Front Porch, 2: Entry Hall, 3: Dining Room, 4: Day Parlor, 5: Ballroom, 6: TV Room, 7: The Library, 8: The Green Parlor, 9: The Red Room, 10: Back Hall, 11: Breakfast Nook, 12: The Conservatory, 13: Downstairs Bathroom, 14: Kitchen, 15: the Hall at the Top of the Stairs, 16: The Nursery, 17: Little Sister's Room 18: The Wicked's Room 19: Killarina's Room 20: Mr. Mandrake's Room, 21: Mr. Mandrake's Private Bathroom**

**1: Front Porch**
From the outside, Mr. Mandrake's immense front porch looks like a grinning mouth. The windows above it glow like a cat's eyes and the shabby white pillars look like rotting teeth. But it's just a porch. It isn't even haunted.

There may or may not be 1-5 of Mr. Mandrake's goons lurking in the darkness on the porch. It's completely unlit, making it hard to see if anyone is there. With a Notice Check vs. DC 20 a PC will spot shapes moving, the glow of a cigarette or the muffled sound of men talking in low tones. Of course a PC with Dark Vision, Low-Light Vision or certain other super-senses (at the GM's discretion) doesn't need to make a roll to tell if anyone is on the porch or not.

It's almost impossible for the PCs to walk across the porch without making noise—it squeaks and groans with every step. All Stealth Checks are made at a –6 here, unless you hold completely still or somehow don't touch the floor. Yet the floor is surprisingly sturdy. It's Toughness 5 and can hold even the heaviest PC.

The pillars are Toughness 6 and they are large enough for a Medium sized target to take cover behind. If more than three of them are destroyed, the porch's roof will sway alarmingly, sending down a shower of dust and debris. But it will not fall, no matter how many pillars give way. If you knock down every last one, the roof will hang there unsupported in midair.

The door to Hell House looms at the back of the porch. If you have decided to set the scenario in late October, then the door is festooned with cheesy Halloween decorations that look as though they were bought from a drugstore discount bin. On either side of the door, someone has put up yellow signs that read "Scared, Aintcha?" and "Danger! Don't Open! Real Scary!" But the PCs won't have to open the door. As they approach, it opens by itself. And yes, it creaks.

**Underneath the Porch**
Some PCs insist on searching absolutely every last inch of the villain's lair. If they look around the right side of the porch, they can find a trapdoor leading to the space underneath the porch. But there's nothing much to see down there. Just some old broken down lawn movers, some rusty yard furniture, and the rotting corpses of a few girl scouts, surrounded by scattered boxes of cookies.

The space is uncomfortably low. Anyone who is more than four and a half feet tall will have to stoop. Make all skill and combat rolls at a –2 penalty down here unless the GM thinks you have some good excuse not to.

**2: Entrance Hall**
From the long entrance hall, you can see all the way to the windows at the back of the house. It's dark in here, but a little light comes in from the open doorways on either side. Sometimes troubling shadows flicker out of the doorways, but never while you are looking directly into them. If the PCs have come at the right time of year, cheap, lurid, tacky Halloween decorations hang from the paneled walls.

Ancient full length mirrors with big heavy wooden frames stand between the open doorways, no two alike. These mirrors are treacherous. Each one projects unpleasant illusions, most of which are only visible if you aren't looking directly at the mirror. You reflection may suddenly stop what it's doing, turn and start sneaking up on one of the other PCs. Or a huge black shape may suddenly appear behind you, or one of your comrades may look like a hideous monster, standing in your midst. Or the room may seem to be full of dead children with horrible glowing eyes, standing all around

the PCs. Or one member of the group may appear to cast no reflection at all (hey, why was Doctor Pennington looking funny at them?).

The Mirrors are only Toughness 1. However, if you make a conscious effort to smash one, your reflection will snarl, revealing teeth like a shark, and lunge for you. This does not stop you from striking the mirror, but it does hit you with a PL 7 Stunning attack as the mirror shatters (some people faint from the shock).

When the PCs get halfway down the hall, the front door slams shut behind them. Unless of course they were polite enough to close it themselves.

The walls in the entrance hall are stained and cracked, but stronger than they look. Toughness 6, they won't collapse no matter how many giant holes you punch in them. If you smashed it all away, the upper sections would still stand, hanging impossibly in mid-air.

**3: Dining Room**

A long oak table dominates this room. Old china cabinets loom down from nooks in the wall, as does a truly spectacular painting of the devil, about to devour a tiny naked man. Mr. Mandrake has forced his mother's animated corpse to smash a lot of her beloved china, and little pieces of it crunch underfoot.

This room is separated from the Day Parlor only by a row of Toughness 3 pillars and you can easily see into that room from here.

Mr. Mandrake still takes his meals in this room, so it's in better shape than much of the house. He doesn't much bother with picking up after himself. Used plates, glasses and silverware are piled up at one end of the table.

Some of the chairs have been knocked over or stand askew at crazy angles but they're all in good condition. Big, heavy, ornate and made of oak, they look uncomfortable and severe.

A pile of discarded newspapers lies at the foot of Mr. Mandrake's chair, going back ten years or so. Some small human bones lie on one dirty plate. On another are what appear to be the bones of a kitten.

The table itself is Toughness five and big enough for half a dozen people to take cover behind. It weighs 850 pounds and does 4 Damage if it's somehow used as a weapon. Each of the china cabinets weighs 500 pounds and does 4 Damage, while the sideboards and credenzas (for simplicity's sake) each weigh 300 pounds or so and do 3 Damage.

**4: Day Parlor**

Directly adjacent to the Dining Room, divided from it by a set of Toughness 3 wooden pillars (don't worry about knocking them down—it won't collapse the ceiling. In fact knocking the walls out won't, either), this room is where Mr. Mandrake spends much of his time. It's packed with heavy old furniture, knick-knacks and bric-a-brac. Of course, Mr. Mandrake's definition of a keepsake may be rather different from yours and mine. At least one human skull sits on a cluttered end table. It looks like the skull of a child. A withered human hand lies on top on a sideboard, near some ceramic figurines of smiling, round-cheeked alpine children.

Twelve different clocks stand around the room, all of them broken, each one showing a different time. Mr. Mandrake jokes that since there are twelve of them, at least one is right all the time, so there's no need to have them fixed.

The sofas are Toughness 0, weigh about 300 pounds each and do 4 Damage. The Overstuffed chairs are Toughness 1, weighs 150 pounds and does 3 Damage. A side-table or a coffee table is Toughness 3 and does 2 Damage. The big grandfather clock is Toughness 3 (although the glass panes in the side are only Toughness 1), weighs 250 pounds and does 3 Damage.

**5: The Ballroom**
Once used for large gatherings, now the room lies empty and silent. A few dusty pieces of furniture rest in its corners. Something in the very middle of the floor makes an odd, high-pitched skittering sound. If the PCs investigate, they discover something odd.

On the floor, a mouse frantically tries to get out from under an overturned water glass. Will the PC's take pity on him and lift up the glass to let him go? If they do, nothing sinister happens. The mouse just runs away. He's the first mouse foolish enough to venture into Hell House in years and he's already regretting it badly.

However, Hell House doesn't like being deprived of its sadistic thrills. All the broken clocks in the Day Parlor across the hall start chiming angrily once the PCs let the mouse go. They ring six times, then stop.

The bulky old sofas around the room's edges weigh about 250 pounds each, are Toughness 2 and do 3 Damage if you hit somebody with them. The sideboards weigh about 150 pounds, are Toughness 3 and do 3 Damage. As noted before, while the walls are only Toughness 5, the ceiling won't collapse no matter how much of the wall you bash out.

**6: The TV Room**
Ghostly blue light flickers from the door of this room. As the PCs approach, they will hear a strange, unsettling mixture of sounds. It sounds a lot like someone desperately unhappy is watching TV. A religious program blares tired platitudes into the air, a preacher begs and threatens the audience for money. Something grunts, moans and squeals in reply, its voice choked and thick. Whatever is watching that gospel program, it doesn't sound human.

The room itself is completely bare. There is no carpet on the floor, the flocked velvet wallpaper sags off in rotting sheets. The only furnishings are a huge easy chair, all stained, caked and fraying, and a big new 40 inch television set, which has been plugged into the wall with a long, unsafe looking chain of extension cords. Something is sitting on the couch with its back to the door, silhouetted in the bluish TV light. It shakes and grunts and sobs as the preacher rails on and on.

What exactly is sitting in that chair depends on how much resistance the GM wants to offer the PCs. If you would like to increase the danger level, then it's The Thing Under the Hill. See Appendix B, Page 132 for the Thing's stats and an explanation of why it's sitting here watching TV.

If the GM doesn't want to throw another PL 10 villain at them, then it's another zombie. This one is a little old lady—in fact it's Mr. Mandrake's dear sweet mother. She doesn't like the show, but she doesn't like being distracted from it, either, and she will attack anyone who manages to catch her attention. If the PCs destroy the zombie and then run into Mr. Mandrake later, he will jovially ask them "Did you interrupt my dear sweet mother while she was watching television? That was the worst punishment I could think of for her--an eternity of soap

operas and religious TV. I'm frankly a little miffed that you released her from it."

**7: The Library**
There are no books left in the Library. Shelves line the walls, barren and empty, up to the ceiling. Where have all the books gone?

A sofa, a comfortable chair and a side-table sit in front of the fireplace. A zombie in a very expensive sweater shuffles slowly back and forth in the darkness, mumbling unhappily to himself. It sounds almost as though he is weeping. Bumping up against the heavy furniture, slipping and stumbling, he walks endlessly back and forth between the bookshelves and the fireplace.

This is Mr. Mandrake's father, Harriman West. His son commanded him to burn all his beloved books and didn't think to tell him to take breaks when he felt tired or thirsty. As a result, he died while carrying out his wretched task and his corpse still wanders back and forth, trying to follow out the order, moaning in hopeless misery and rage. Anyone who examines the fireplace can see that lot of books were burned there, years ago.

Harriman West isn't a very aggressive zombie. He will barely notice the PCs unless they attack him. Even then, he will only defend himself until he can fight free of their clutch, and he will then attempt to go back to his job.

The sofa is Toughness 0, weighs 300 pounds and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon. The moldering overstuffed chair is Toughness 1, weighs 150 pounds and does 3 Damage. A side-table is Toughness 3 and does 2 Damage.

The fireplace still has a poker resting beside it. The fireplace poker is Toughness 8 and does 3 Damage.

A set of antlers over the mantle can also be used as an improvised weapon, in a pinch. This dusty old trophy weighs 90 pounds and does 3 Damage if you hit someone with the pointy end. But a it's clumsy, awkward weapon (-2 to your attack roll). It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to snap off an antler if you'd like to use it separately and avoid the penalty.

**Harriman West—Upper Crust Zombie**
**PL:** 2

| | |
|---|---|
| **Str:** 18 (+4) | **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** n/a |
| **Int:** 2 (-4) | **Wis:** n/a **Cha:** n/a |
| **Initiative:** -1 | **Attack Bonus:** 2 |
| **Defense:** 0 | **Toughness Save:** 2 (impervious) |
| **Fortitude Save:** n/a | |
| **Reflexes Save:** 2 | **Willpower Save:** 2 |

**Feats:** Fearless, Improved Grapple
**Powers:** Immunity 31 (Critical Hits, all Fortitude Effects), Protection 2 (Impervious), Super-Senses (Darkvision), Super-Strength 4 (Flaw: Limited [does not allow the zombie to lift more than their base carrying capacity, useful only to wrestle opponents])
**Complications:** Loves his books, but must destroy them
**Drawbacks:** Disabled (No sense of touch, moves only 15 feet per round)

**8: Green Parlor**
Filled with heavy, mismatched furniture and a massive fireplace with a flue that has been clogged for ages, this is where Mr. Mandrake's mother used to entertain her less important friends. The room has gone downhill since. All the furniture is waterlogged and thick with reeking mold.

The sofas weigh six hundred pounds each and do four Damage if picked up and used as weapons. The big heavy overstuffed chairs weigh 150 pounds each and do 3 Damage. The ugly claw footed coffee table weighs 60 pounds (thanks to its marble top) and does 2 Damage if you hit somebody with it.

If the GM wants to give the PCs an additional challenge, then the room is occupied—a group of four of Mr. Mandrake's PL 3 henchmen (see Page 120 for a stat block) are tormenting a zombie by the light of a Coleman lantern. The creature was buried in her wedding dress and wears its tatters still. She lunges drunkenly from one of the laughing men to the other while they keep her at bay with their rifle butt.

The PCs may well hear snatches of male laughter and groans from this part of the house before they venture down here, but the room is isolated from the main entry hall and they may not hear them. Should the PCs get reasonably close to the room, they will certainly hear the sounds and see the light from under the door.

If they burst in and surprise the henchmen, the bride uses this opportunity to snatch one of her tormenters and bury her teeth in his face. The others ignore his screams and struggles as they move to engage the PCs.

If the PCs cause any kind of noise or disturbance in the house, the thugs will hear them and will leave the zombie bride and take up positions in the parlor and the dining room, ready to ambush the interfering heroes on the way out. They'll take cover behind bulky old pieces of furniture and try to concentrate their fire on the toughest looking PCs.

**9: The Red Room**

Formerly some kind of parlor, the Red Room shares a closet with the room next to it. Here Mr. Mandrake first learned to love secret, hidden things, playing in the closet that led to another room.

It's hard to see why they called it the "Red Room". A few scraps of red velvet wallpaper hang limply from the walls and a fragment of a magnificent red carpet rests askew in one corner, but apart from this the room is bare and empty.

There is a trick that it likes to play on visitors. Whenever you open the door to step inside, there is about a ¼ chance that it doesn't lead to this room. Instead it leads to some other doorway in the house. Step through and you are teleported straight to the other room. It could be any one, on any floor.

The door can suddenly change its destination while a group of people is passing through it, single file. If it does this, it will only take the last person in line to a different room, and it won't do this if anyone is looking at hem. You can turn up anywhere in the house—it's the GM's choice as to which room you arrive in.

The closet at the back of the room has the same weird and unsettling habit, but unlike the door to the room it will almost always lead you astray. If you walk into the closet and exit through the door on the other side, there is a ¾ chance that it leads to a completely different room. About one time out of ten, it leads to a spot deep in the forest, near the clearing where Mr. Mandrake is preparing the sacrifice (see Page 102). If the door in fact leads into the woods, no one from the other side can see, hear or otherwise detect you until you step through. This portal is strictly one-way. You can't step into the closet from the forest. You can fire ranged attacks out the door without anyone in the forest being able to strike back at you (these attacks will seem to come out of nowhere) but there isn't much to shoot at on the other side. Just some deformed looking trees and some tufts of dead grass. Someone who tries sticking their head out of the doorway into the forest without going all the way though can pull their head and other limbs back inside if they want to. They will appear to be stepping partway out of an invisible doorway from the other side. Whichever body part they are sticking through will be vulnerable to attack from the outside. It's unlikely that anyone else will be around to see or attack them, anyway.

**10: Back Hall**
The Back Hall opens onto the Rear Porch. The door is Toughness 3, but it isn't locked. Some dusty old side tables sit in the corners (Toughness 2, each does 1 Damage if you hit somebody with them) A portrait hangs on the wall, so obscured by dirt that it's features are completely obscure. A set of unlit wooden steps lead down to the basement. It's much too dark to see anything down there. If someone gets close to the steps and tries to peer down them, the house may decide to use an illusion on them (this is strictly up to the GM).

"Hey," an illusory voice whispers from the dark at the bottom of the stairs "come a little closer." If they are actually brave or foolish enough to do what the voice says, when they reach the top of the steps, it whispers again, this time from *behind* them "Thanks" it says. Then something pushes them, hard. Make a Reflexes Check vs. DC 20 or fall down the stairs.

**The Basement Steps**
The stairs appear to vanish down into the dark. However, anyone with Darkvision, Blindsight or some other kind of super-senses that (at the GM's discretion) should let them see in darkness will notice that the stairs actually end about halfway down. You would need to fly or levitate to go any further without hurting yourself—the basement is deep. Anyone who walks down the stairs without being able to see must make a Reflexes Check vs. DC 15 or fall into the basement, landing on top of a pile of rusty broken bicycles and dead paperboys for 3 Damage.

The house has one extra little trick to play on people who venture down the steps. There is an illusion that makes the steps look two stairs longer than they really are. Unless you can spot the illusion in time, you will still have to make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 to keep from falling. At the GM's option, some versions of Blindsight (sonar, for example) may not be fooled by the illusion.

**Rear Porch**
A single blue porch light burns back here. A scarecrow with a pumpkin for a head sits sprawled on a rocking chair, creaking slowly back and forth. A freshly painted yellow sign around the scarecrow's neck reads: "You're All Going to Die in There."

A cheaply printed plastic banner across the top of the door says "Trick or Treat!"

Surprise! It really is just a scarecrow, stuffed with straw, inert and harmless. But why is the chair rocking by itself? If you stop it, it stays stopped.

The rear porch and steps creak atrociously. If you can't fly or levitate, you will make all Stealth Checks at a -2 here.

**11: Breakfast Nook**
Not much to see in this little room but another old dead grandfather clock sitting in one corner. For some reason the numbers go up to 13. A set of splintery bare wooden steps leads down into the Conservatory.

When you aren't looking directly at the clock-face, it sometimes starts to look disturbingly like a skull. If you would like to smash the clock, or pick it up and throw it at somebody, you will find that it is Toughness 3, weighs 100 pounds and does 3 Damage. It makes a distressingly human sound when broken.

**12: The Conservatory**
This is where Mr. Mandrake grows his prize-winning Lavatera flowers. The secret ingredient is dead paperboys, he tells people. But he's only kidding. He really prefers dead prostitutes.

Four steps lead down into the room, which is on the same level with the ground. A door leads outside. The door is locked.

Toughness 3, it requires a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the lock.

Two rows of planters run down the room, on raised platforms. Each planter has a window in the side, allowing you to monitor the growth of the roots. The first couple of planters look normal enough—some truly marvelous Lavatera flowers grow in each one. The rest of the planters are also full of Lavateras, but the PCs can see that some of them have fingers sticking up out of them, clutching crookedly at the air. A woman's forehead and lips protrude from the top of another, half-hidden amid the flowers. It looks almost as though she has been frozen in the act of rising from a bath.
You can see another woman's tangled blonde hair through one of the windows, in the soil. At least one woman is almost completely visible in another window, crammed headfirst down into the pot with her back and limbs bent at impossible angles to fit.

Look more carefully and you may spot some of the stiff dead fingers twitch. For while these ladies are all deceased, they are not exactly resting in peace. If you break open one of the pots (Toughness 2, each weighs 400 pounds when full), the dead woman inside will spend a round rising slowly to her feet, looking this way and that in wonderment. Then she will attack the nearest PC, the flowers that sprout from her flesh trembling as she moves.

"Want a date, honey?" she will gurgle indistinctly as she bites into the PCs. You can find some stats for the zombies on Page 126.

Mr. Mandrake will be miffed if any of his prize Lavateras get damaged. Then again, he already plans to kill the PCs as painfully as possible, so perhaps it doesn't matter.

**Back Steps**
Not as creaky or dilapidated as the other stairs, don't penalize anyone's Stealth Check here. The stairs lead up to a Toughness 3 door, with a lock which requires a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick. This is the only exterior door which is locked. If the PCs have come at night, there is no exterior light at this door and it's quite dark on the steps. If the GM has set this adventure in late October, then the back door is festooned with cheap and cheesy Halloween decorations.

The very first time a PC reaches toward the doorknob, there is a loud thump from upstairs, just before they touch the doorknob. The sound is not repeated.

**13: Downstairs Bathroom**
Mr. Mandrake's bathroom is surprisingly normal. It's even clean.

The fixtures here are heavy, expensive and old. The toilet flushes with a pull-chain attached to the ceiling. An antique wooden stand beside it holds some reading material—copies of American Satanist Magazine, Vivisection Weekly and some medical journals devoted to lethal birth defects (with full-color pictures, naturally).

Mr. Mandrake values his bathroom privacy and the house respects this (it's also too prudish to direct its awareness into the bathroom while someone is inside). Nothing creepy or disruptive at all will happen while the PCs are in the bathroom. It's the only safe refuge in the house.

The marble sink weighs 100 pounds and does 3 Damage if you hit somebody with it. Firmly attached, it takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to rip it off the wall. The toilet weighs 50 pounds and does 2 Damage. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to pull it out of the floor. The medicine cabinet is relatively flimsy. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 15 to yank the door loose. It does 1 Damage (2 on the first round from the

shattering glass). There is a well-stocked first aid kit in the medicine cabinet, but not toiletries (Mr. Mandrake keeps all his sundries in his personal bathroom, upstairs).

**14: Kitchen**

You might expect an evil sorcerer's kitchen to be pretty disgusting, but in fact Mr. Mandrake has been having his new zombies clean up in here, so apart from a lingering smell of zombie, it's actually in decent shape. And he hasn't been cooking anything really vile here recently, so to get really grossed out you're going to have to open the refrigerator.

The room contains a beautiful old cast iron stove with a random assortment of skillets and pots on its burners. Granite-topped counters run along the walls, with oak cabinet over and under them. The cabinets are pretty bare. One of them contains nothing but neatly stacked boxes of Ovaltine mix and packaged candy apples (Mr. Mandrake never liked either one, but his sister did, so he takes delight in eating and drinking them in front of her ghost, to taunt her). The rest are empty.

A small round kitchen table and some chairs sit in the middle of the room, although Mr. Mandrake never eats here. The large white refrigerator contains the remains of about three human beings in various parts, all ready to serve, as well as a big glass bottle of milk and some boxes of leftover Chinese food Six eyes sit in a Tupperware bowl.

Kitchens are good places for violence. The knives and other cutlery in the drawers do up to 3 Damage. The stove is Toughness 8, weighs 750 pounds and does 5 Damage if used as a weapon. The table is made of heavy wood. Toughness 3, it weighs 150 pounds and does 3 Damage. The chairs are Toughness 3, weigh about 50 pounds each and do 2 Damage. The fridge is full, which makes it heavy. Toughness 3, it weighs 500 pounds and does 4 Damage.

**The Main Stairs**

These stairs creak atrociously. Any Stealth Check you make here suffers a -2 penalty, unless you have some way of climbing the stairs without actually touching them.

Big old portraits of sinister looking ancestors loom down from the walls. Many of them have been defaced or mutilated or have insulting comments scribbled across them. Some of these are Mr. Mandrake's ancestors, but most of them he bought at estate sales because they looked sinister. Or because he thought it would be funny to outbid some grieving relative of the deceased.

As the PCs walk up the stairs, they hear the faint sound of a little girl crying, somewhere above them. Then the sound stops. The noise is coming from Mr. Mandrake's little sister's room. More on this can be found on page 148.

**The Rear Stairs**

These were formerly the servants' stairs, but Mr. Mandrake has difficulty keeping servants—he finds it much too exciting to kill them. The enclosed staircase is steep, narrow and uncarpeted. Medium-sized characters can only move up them single file. A single bare bulb provides what light there is. There is nothing on the wall.

Hell House has a keen sense of snobbery and it feels contempt for people who use the servant's stairs, particularly if they aren't from the servile classes themselves. It knows a couple of nasty tricks to play on them.

The first time the PCs venture either up or down these stairs, the light suddenly goes out. Then, as they stand there in the dark, a pair of malevolent yellow eyes appears at the foot of the staircase, and begins rapidly moving toward them. Another pair of yellow eyes winks into being and follows the first pair. And then a third. This is just an illusion. The eyes won't do anything but

hover near the PCs (if Our Heroes haven't already run away) and stare balefully. They don't have any physical substance. If someone turns a light on, they vanish.

However, these stairs hold another and much more real peril. If the PCs start to hurry up or down them, something unseen will attempt to trip whoever is last in line. They should make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 25 or fall on the stairs, taking 1 Damage. Then they must succeed at a Reflexes Save vs. DC 20, or fall all the way down the stairs for another 2 Damage. Characters who can fly can of course ignore this second save. Characters who were levitating up the stairs can ignore the whole thing.

**15: The Hall at the Top of the Stairs**

Empty, except for a small, ugly end-table with a dead plant on top. The first time anyone leans against any of the walls, it will suddenly give way, plaster crunching, lath snapping and splintering. Then as they fall into the hole, the wall will seal itself up behind them, leaving no mark. Treat this as a PL 10 Snare, which also does 2 Damage on the first round only.

The moment the wall engulfs anyone, all the clocks in the house strike thirteen times, even the ones that are broken. Then as the sound dies away the house begins to laugh, its deep, horrible inhuman voice coming out of the walls all around.

Inside the wall, you can hear the house's heart slowly beating and feel its stagnant breath all around you.

If you smash your way into the wall to rescue an injured, struggling comrade (try not to damage them any worse as you do it!) the wall actually starts bleeding where you tear at it.

Any holes you dig in the wall remain there until you leave. When you come back, the holes have mysteriously vanished.

**16: The Nursery**

As the PCs approach the entrance to this room, something inside grunts, squeals and throws itself into the door with tremendous force, sending dust trickling down out of the wallpaper. If the PCs don't open the door it grunts again, and beats on the door repeatedly. If they walk away from the door, it falls silent. If they open the door or look through it with X-ray vision, the room is empty. If on the other hand they use a psychic or magical power like Clairvoyance to look into the room, they see a sickening illusion. One of the PCs is on the other side of the door. Their hands tied behind their back and their mouth gruesomely mutilated. They are banging on the door with their head, as tears stream down their face. But if they're really being held captive on the other side of that door, then who is standing here next to you?

If the PC have opened the door and stepped into the room they hear something run down the hall behind them, down the stairs and out the front door, as though they had released some invisible thing from this room. They haven't, though. It's all an illusion.

The room itself has yellow wallpaper covered with pictures of teddy bears and candy canes. It contains a rocking chair, and a huge, ugly, antique crib, turned over on its side and empty. Someone has pulled great strips of paper off the wall, and ripped at the plaster underneath with their fingernails.

Some words have been written on the wall, over the crib, in some dark and evil smelling substance. Over and over and over the words repeat, more than a hundred times. "Baby's Pain Keeps Us Sane." What this means, perhaps it's better not to speculate.

This is one of the rooms that Mr. Mandrake has told his thugs to regard as off limits. Neither they nor any member of the Goth Squad will venture inside, even if they are pursuing the Player Characters.

**17: Little Sister's Room**

The PCs may or may not hear a little girl crying as they pass by this door. The room contains an enormous collection of dolls. Row upon row, shelf upon shelf of them, each exquisitely handcrafted—worth hundreds of dollars. This is every bit as creepy as it sounds. Their staring eyes seem to follow you as you walk across the room.

What kind of an arch-villain collects dolls? A really evil one, from the looks of things. A wide low work table sits in the middle of the room—each covered with tiny implements of torture and broken doll parts. There's even a little doll-sized guillotine, for when they've been really bad. If the PCs look more carefully, they can see that quite a few of the dolls on the shelves have already been mutilated in all kinds of disturbing ways. Burns and cuts mark their perfect porcelain features. Some have cruel humiliating remarks cut into their faces. ("I'm Ugly and Stupid" for example). Others are missing fingers, hands or heads.

Mr. Mandrake delights in the way all the dolls are forced to watch the terrible things he does to their sisters. But he likes to make his own little sister watch even more. He has long since killed, eaten and excreted her, but he's trapped her ghost in this room. That was her the PCs heard sobbing. These are her dolls.

The spirit herself is a sad, powerless little thing who can't hurt anybody. Neither can the dolls, but a PC sorcerer with the power to animate them might find a way to give Mr. Mandrake a nasty surprise the next time he comes in here for some entertainment.

The ghost won't be here when the PCs first look into the room—she's shy. However, if one of them uses some kind of supernatural power to summon her, or the GM just wants to give them a good scare, she will appear in a corner, behind them, sprawled on the floor facing away from them, with her face hidden by her long and tangled hair. The PCs should not actually see her materialize. She's just there, in a spot that was empty when they looked at it moments ago. She is crying, because her brother is mean to her and hurts her dolls. And he killed her and ate her, too. Wasn't that crummy of him?

She knows the layout of the house and she knows her brother's favorite spot in the woods (where he will in fact be conducting tonight's ceremony) but apart from that she's not much help to them—she can't even leave the room. A kind GM may let a PC magician come up with some kind of arcane way to break the spell on this room and release her pitiful little soul into he beyond.

This room is off-limits to everyone but Mr. Mandrake himself. Neither his hired thugs nor any member of the Goth Squad will willingly venture inside (although at the GM's discretion, Badmoon might break the rule if he is in a frenzy).

**18: The Wicked's Room**

The Wicked and Killarina are the only two members of the Goth Squad crazy enough to actually live in Hell House.

This small, bare room suites the Wicked perfectly—although it's still much larger than the closet where he spent most of his childhood. He's too nuts to take proper care of his surroundings and to Hell House's annoyance he has scribbled all over its walls.

It's clear at a glance that a madman lives here. There is no furniture, empty take-out food cartons litter the floor. The walls are covered with crudely scribbled pentagrams, pictures of the Devil and incoherent phrases like "Satan All Rule the 666!" He's even managed to deface the ceiling with this gibberish. Under a particularly large picture of a fanged goat skull, he seems to have made a crude shrine to the forces of darkness. There are burn marks and

bloodstains on the floor, spatters on the nearby wall (he whips himself here) and the charred body of a stray cat.

The only tidy thing in this room is a row of cheaply-made Halloween masks on the floor—all of them masks of the Devil. He has a few spare capes and boots nearby.

It's puzzling at first as to why there's no bed. In fact he sleeps in the closet, in a tangle of dirty blankets.

**19: Killarina's Room**

God knows where she was able to find this much pink fabric. The room is draped in it, pinned up in crazy pink swoops and swatches everywhere. Her bed is pink, too, and covered with stuffed animals, most of whom have had their heads or other limbs cut off. She also has a lot of headless dolls (and she's always sneaking over to Mr. Mandrake's doll room to gaze enviously inside).

Her pink bedspread is covered with unicorns, rainbows and crusted old bloodstains. A small night-table, also pink, rests next to her bed, covered with cosmetics, painkillers, copies of Modern Dance magazine and a severed finger or two. A jewelry box contains a spare necklace of human ears (she has more ears in her collection than will fit on a single necklace). The trunk at the foot of her bed contains her clothes and a few gruesome trophies. In one corner of the room she has neatly arranged the heads from all her dolls. In the opposite corner are some real human heads that she has recently collected. Nearby sits a small antique record player, from about the mid 1950s. We're sure you can guess what record she has on it.

Killarina's bed weighs about six hundred pounds and does 4 Damage if you hit somebody with it. Her night table weighs just 20 pounds and does 2 Damage. Her chest weighs 100 pounds and does 3 Damage. Her Kamas do more, but neither one of them is in the room—she's carrying them with her and she isn't here.

**20: Mr. Mandrake's Room**

Part bedroom, part workshop, part lair of unspeakable depravity, this is where Mr. Mandrake concocts his diabolical schemes. It's tidier than you might expect from the rest of the house.

His bed is large, with expensive coverings. It's always unmade and sometimes there's a corpse or two in it (but not tonight). A chimpanzee skull perches jauntily atop one of his bedposts. A heavy chest of drawers and a writing desk sit nearby. Both are covered in old knick-knacks and odd items he's picked up. This includes an authentic Zippo lighter, the skull of a deformed

squirrel and a candle made of human fat, with some neck vertebrae and other bones for a holder. At least one of his lampshades is clearly made from human skin—it has a bellybutton visible on it.

Shelves hold his books. Some of them are titles that most occultists have heard of (but may not want to believe exist) like the Necrophagia Invictus of Konrad Ulf, or the legendary Book of Seven Wicked Things (in the original Tibetan). Others are far worse—volumes no student of occult lore has ever dared to dream of. There is a Book of Glass, the pages of which are shattered mirrors that distort the reader's face and weep blood (the cracks form the letters of a secret alphabet that only the dammed may read). There is the Book of Writhing Flesh, printed on and bound in warm human skin that pulses and breathes beneath your fingers, its words spelled out in a forbidden language of scars, moles and tattoos. There is a Book of Ashes, which relates a single fairy tale with an unspeakable ending on every page, but never shows the same page twice. Worst of all is the simple black spiral notebook that holds Mr. Mandrake's own diary.

In game terms, any one of the really powerful books in this room can be used by a PC Ritualist. However, anyone who opens the most terrible volumes in the collection suffers the effect of the feat "Fearsome Presence 5", the moment they begin to read.

While they might be able to figure out the details of the ritual Mr. Mandrake has planned for tonight by reading his books (GM's discretion) they probably won't have to. On his writing desk, mixed in with index cards and scraps of paper where he has jotted down his most evil thoughts, Mr. Mandrake has laid out all his diagrams and notes and they explain the whole thing. There's even a map of the grounds, pinned to the wall above the desk, which precisely pinpoints the location where the ritual is to take place. In large red letters it says "Hold Ritual Here"

Mr. Mandrake's disgusting candle is in fact magical. When lit, it Neutralizes (PL 12) Magical Invisibility in a 15 foot radius. It does not affect anyone who is actually holding it, although the fact that they are holding a candle may still make it hard for them to conceal their presence. The candle is an easily broken Toughness 0. There are not other magical objects present, apart from the books. Mr. Mandrake has plenty, but they're all presently in use.

The bed is made of heavy old wood. The frame is Toughness 3 and it weighs 400 pounds. It does 4 Damage if picked up and used as a weapon.

The chest of drawers is Toughness 3, weighs 180 pounds when full, and does 3 Damage. The writing desk is Toughness 3, weighs 500 pounds and does 4 Damage. The bookshelves are Toughness 2 (made of heavy wood, but not very strongly put together) weigh 300 pounds when full of 75 pounds when you dump the books off of them and do either 3 or 4 Damage, depending on whether or not they are full.

A wicked-looking letter opener made out of broken human bones does 3 Damage, but isn't magical, just vile.

Inside the writing desk are a number of unbelievably cruel and wicked letters that Mr. Mandrake has written to various random people, just to mess with them. One of the letters (complimenting Mr. and Mrs. Langley Bumph on the untimely and painful death of their daughter) has a curse embedded in it. The first person who touches it suffers a Poison effect (Damage 10) some time in the next three days, unless they make a Willpower Save vs. DC 20.

**21: Mr. Mandrake's Private Bathroom**

This is his sanctum sanctorum. As mentioned above, Mr. Mandrake greatly

values his bathroom privacy and he has taken drastic measures to ensure it. The door to this room is Toughness 10, and anyone who tries to enter it while the door is closed gets hit by a PL 12 Mental Blast. It's PL 14 if they do it without knocking first. At the time the PCs stop by, the door happens to be closed. If a PC reaches for the knob, a face forms in the door's wood-grain (or they notice that a shape in the grain resembles a face—it's hard to say which)

"Mr. Mandrake values his bathroom privacy" it squeaks in a voice like a pompous, angry child. "Answer the secret question or die twitching. What is Mr. Mandrake's favorite pastime?"

It's possible to use telepathy to read the door's Mind (DC 25) and find out the answer. It's rather long, but here's the complete text:

*That depends. Sometimes he likes to walk at night and kick sick people groaning under walls. Sometimes he eats kittens, live and wriggling. Sometimes he likes to read the obituaries, find a person recently deceased, and go prop them up against their friends' front door. And in their flesh he cuts the words "Though I am dead, don't let your sorrow die."*

"How true!" The door will say "you must be dear compatriots of his." And it will open. If you lock the door from the inside, it takes a Disable device Check vs. DC 15 to pick the lock, but of course this subjects whoever is picking the lock to the door's attack.

Inside is an handsome antique toilet (Toughness 3, weighs 60 pounds, takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to uproot, does 2 Damage if used as a weapon, a huge old clawfooted bath tub (Toughness 4, weighs 400 pounds, does 4 Damage if used as a weapon), a marble sink (Toughness 4, weighs 80 pounds, takes a Strength Check vs. DC 20 to uproot, does 3 Damage if used as a weapon) and some towels. The medicine cabinet contains a few Band-Aids, some shaving cream, some Evil cologne ("Splash on the great fresh scent of Evil!"), bubble bath and a fresh, bloody human tooth. A rack by the toilet holds Mr. Mandrake's current bathroom reading material—the Necronomicon and Highlights for Children (he likes the Timbertoes).

**Addendum: The Attic**

Strangely, Mr. Mandrake's attic may be the least creepy part of his house. No one has even bothered converting the space under his eaves into an actual room. All three of these spaces are much the same—there isn't even any real need to map them. Just remember that at its highest point the steeply pitched 2nd story roof is about twelve feet above the floor while the 1st story roofs are all about six feet high.

The floors of all three attics are bare PL 1 plaster. There is no actual flooring, and so there is no safe place to stand. Anything that weighs more than 150 pounds will at once go crashing through the ceiling of the room beneath, taking 2 Damage in the process (before we factor in the damage from falling). For this reason, no one on the West family has ever tried to use their attic as a storage space. The most you might find up here is a dusty box of old rubber bands. There is nothing even approximating a weapon.

**Extra Addendum: The Phantom Hall**

*"Hey, didn't we run past that grandfather clock and that guy in the suit of armor before? Gulp! I think we may be trapped in a cheap homage!"*

This hazard can appear whenever the PCs open a door inside Hell House. Don't roll at random (or else just pretend to). Pull it on them whenever you think it would be dramatically appropriate. Preferably when something evil is chasing them.

The hall only appears when you open a door, and it always looks like it was already there—that it's just where the door happens to lead. You never actually see it appear.

Dimly lit, you can't quite see the end of the hall. PCs with Darkvision will be able to see that the hall ends in a heavy wooden door. The walls have wooden paneling and there's a faded oriental runner carpet on the floor, too worn for the pattern to be easily distinguished (stare at it too long and you will start to see disturbing things).

The dim light comes from a single candelabra on the ceiling—only two of its eight bulbs are working. It requires a Strength Check vs. DC 18 to rip the candelabra down from the ceiling, if for some reason you want to. This of course throws the hall into total darkness. Awkwardly balanced, the candelabra doesn't make a very good weapon,. It does 2 Damage, but the wielder's attack roll suffers a –2 penalty.

The only piece of furniture in the Hall is a grandfather clock. It does not appear to work. Toughness 5, it weighs 120 pounds and does 3 Damage if used as an improvised club.

A little past the clock, a dead superhero leans against the wall. He's wearing some kind of powered armor, but the visor is open, revealing his agonized face. It may or may not be anyone the PCs have heard of before—that's up to the GM. The armor's batteries are long dead and it would take weeks to rebuild the suit's corroded circuitry. You won't be able to scavenge any technological goodies from it (unless the GM decides otherwise). If a PC picks the dead man up and hits something with him, the armored corpse weighs 300 pounds and does 4 Damage. The armor is Toughness 10.

The hall ends in a big heavy oak door, which looks as though it has been battered and nicked many times over the years. It leads back to the beginning of the same hall, looping around through some kind of space-warp. The PCs may not initially notice this, especially if they are fleeing something. But soon they're sure to realize that they have passed that same grandfather clock and that same dead guy in the armor more than once.

It's hard to get out of this trap. The moment you close or turn your back on the door you came in through, it suddenly leads to the door at the far end of the hall. You can wander in this loop indefinitely. That guy in the powered armor died of thirst after a week.

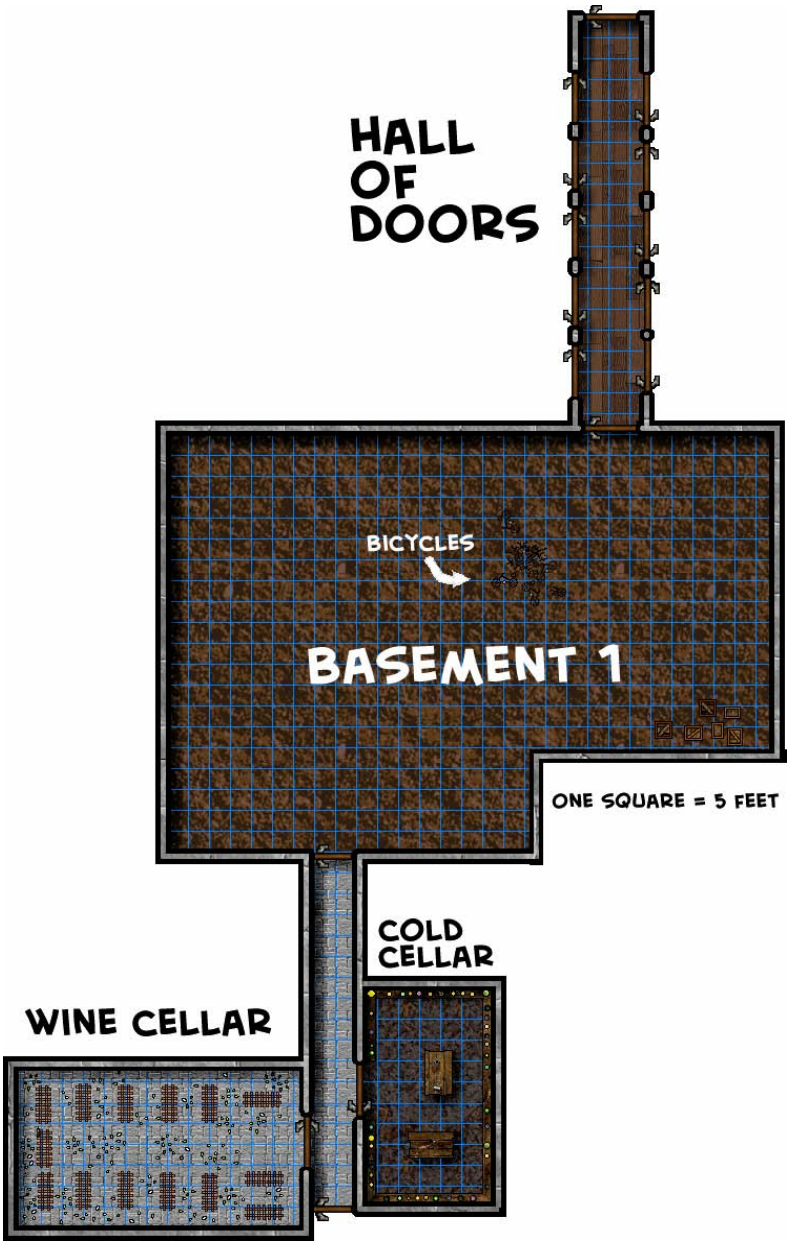
There are two ways out of this trap. If you can teleport, you can use that power to escape. If you can't, then you might be able to bash your way through the wall, ceiling or floor. An Insubstantial character could just walk through them. The walls, floor and ceiling are Toughness 6. Break through (or otherwise pass through) a wall, and you find yourself outside the house. Break through the wall on the opposite side of the hall and the hole leads out of the opposite side of the house. The hole you made doesn't lead back to the Phantom Hall. If some of your companions are still inside the Hall, they can see you through the hole but you can't see them until they exit it. Break though the ceiling and you find yourself in the attic. Break through the floor and you find yourself in the basement.

Clairvoyance or x-ray vision reveals what is on the other side of the walls, ceiling and floors. It feels weird to look from one side of the building to the other, without seeing anything in between.

One final note. If anyone starts to die in the hall the broken grandfather clock begins to chime. It will ring thirteen times and then fall silent. It also does this the moment anyone starts trying to smash their way out.

STRANGE MAGIC

# The Basement




Mr. Mandrake seldom bothers to go down here anymore. But the PCs might want to check it out all the same. We have one or two creepy shocks waiting for them.

**Basement 1**
Completely unfinished, the largest room in the basement doesn't even have a cement floor. It's all bare dirt and rocks. There are

a couple of musty crates in the corner, filled with moldering drapes and spare tablecloths, raddled with moth-holes and age. Apart from that the room's only salient feature is the pathetic pile of dead paperboys and their broken, rusty bikes, just beneath the stairs. As noted in the section on the basement steps, (see Page 144) the stairs end about midway down, leaving a seven and a half foot drop onto the broken, rusty bicycles (3 Damage). How does Mr. Mandrake get down here without any stairs? He doesn't. And on the rare occasions when he does go to the basement, he teleports there. There are no electric lights in this room and even in the day not much light gets through the basement window. It's tough to escape out one of these windows—they're fifteen feet off the floor and so narrow that a Medium sized character can only wriggle through them after making a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15.

Two doors lead out of the main basement room. One leafs to a very weird hall, the other leads to a short passage with a preserves cellar and the wine cellar opening off of them. Both doors are Toughness 3. Neither one is locked at present. The door to the wine cellar and preserves room can only be locked with a key, and the key has been missing for years. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to pick the rusty mechanism. The door to the other hall has no lock, but can be barred from this side. That takes the door's effective Toughness to 5.

**Hall of Doors**

Every door in this hallway leads to a short corridor with another identical door at the end. Open this next door and you will find yourself walking out of one of the other doors in the main hall. The effect is random--it might teleport you out of any of the other doors. In fact, to be fair, the GM should roll a die to determine which door you pop out of. If a group of characters barge through a door together, there is a 75% chance that they will all be sent to the same door and a 25% chance that they will all be sent to separate doors.

This hall is either the ideal place to run away from something scary or the worst possible place, depending on which doors you happen to teleport through. If a PC gets tired of all this dated Hanna Barbera nonsense and tries smashing through the wall, either of the main hallway or any of the short halls, they can open a hole without much difficulty. The wall is only Toughness 4. Nothing but featureless blackness is visible on the other side. Step through, and you will find yourself outside the house, near the front porch, next to a crude drawing of a door that someone has scratched into the wall.

Every fifth time you pass through one of the doors back into the hall, there is a 1/5 chance of triggering some kind of illusion. Usually this takes the form of another door opening, and something coming out of it—often the other figure is a duplicate of yourself, sometimes oddly changed or unspeakably disfigured. Sometimes it's something much worse.

And speaking of worse things, every ten times you pass through one of the doors, there is a 1/10 chance that some sickening extradimensional monstrosity will follow you through. The monster appears right behind you. It will either attack or attempt to drag you back through the door and then devour you in the short hall on the other side. Here is a sample monstrosity. No two are alike. They vary from PL 8 to PL 12.

**Thing from Behind the Door**
**PL:** 8

**Str:** 26 (+8) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 26 (+8)
**Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
**Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 8
**Defense:** 5
**Toughness Save:** 8 (6 Impervious)
**Fortitude Save:** 8
**Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 8

**Skills:** Intimidate 10 (+12)

**Feats:** All-Out Attack, Fearsome Presence 3, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Move-By Action, Power Attack
**Powers:** Additional Limbs 3 (5 additional limbs), Immunity (Aging, Pressure, Suffocation), Impervious Toughness 6, Super-Senses 4 (Darkvision, Scent) Super-Strength 4 (Maximum Lift: 12 Tons)
**Drawbacks:** Hideous (Common, Moderate)

**Wine Cellar**
The West family once had an impressive collection of wine, but Theron made his father's animated corpse smash it all in a moment of perverse whimsy. The racks still stand in this room and there is broken glass all over the floor, but only a single bottle remains intact—a 1948 Chateau La Tour that Mr. Mandrake is saving for the moment when he becomes a god. For only a god should be allowed to drink that wine (and there is something to that argument).

Each empty wine rack is Toughness 3, weighs six hundred pounds and does 4 Damage if used as a weapon (this includes tipping the rack over onto someone). A broken wine bottle does 2 Damage if used like a dagger. It's hazardous to walk across this floor, since it's littered with broken glass. Make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 10 or take 1 Damage each round you move across it. If a player announces that their character is taking some kind of reasonable action to clear the glass away (Super-Breath, Telekinesis, a big broom) let them do it.

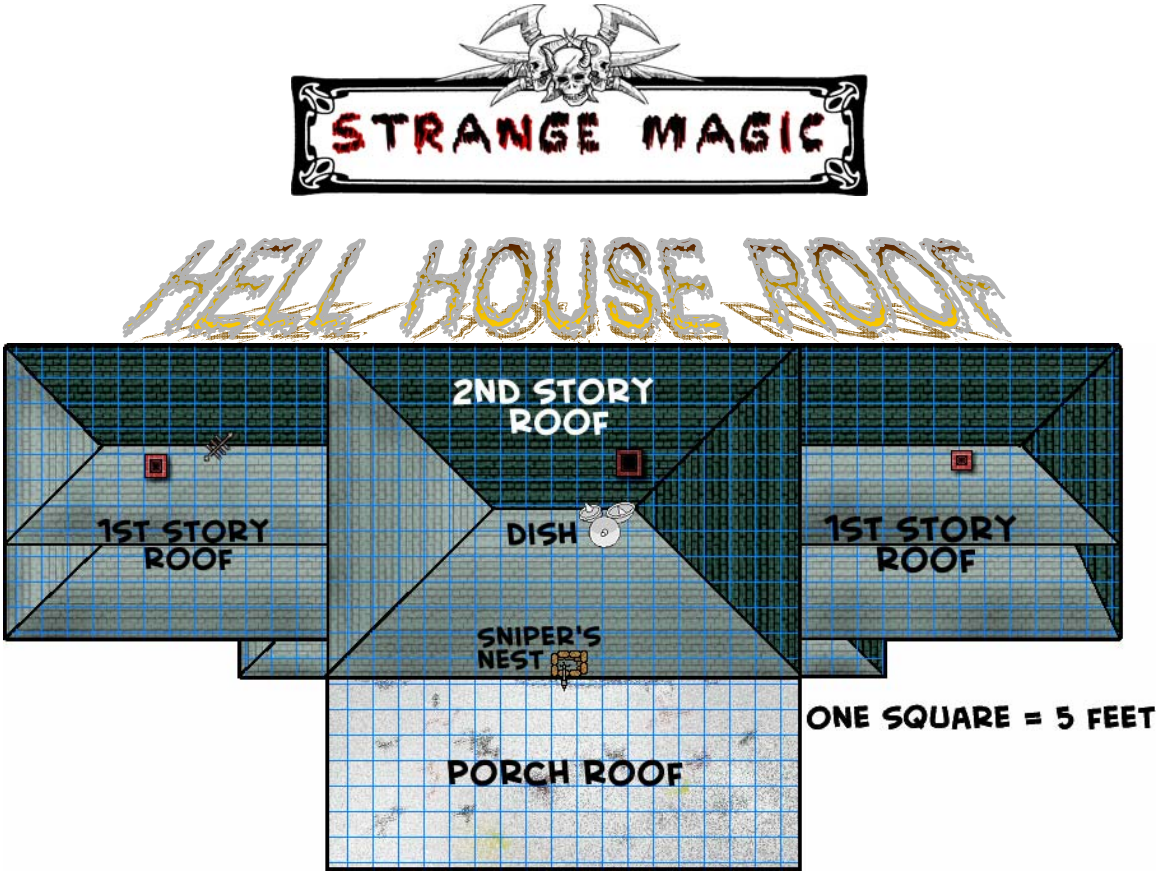
**The Cold Cellar**
Jars upon jars of preserves are stored here on shelves. Most of the jars are ancient and furred with mold, but some are newer. Look carefully at the new ones, however, and you will probably decide that you don't want to eat them. Some contain human heads or hands or eyeballs, some hold deformed fetuses or weird alien monstrosities, all safely dead and preserved in jelly. Empty jars sit in dusty rows on a pair of tables, waiting for new contents. They will probably never be filled now. Mr. Mandrake has tired of this little hobby and never comes down here anymore. Much more satisfying to focus his efforts on becoming a god. Less work, too. A pair of loose-leaf notebooks sit on one of the tables. These were Mr. Mandrake's old journals, but the only thing he ever got around to writing in either of them was a poem, reproduced here for your edification.

**Grave Lover**
*Putrid flesh in wooden crates,*
*Locked inside iron gates,*
*Six feet under, food for worms*
*The reaper waits till your turn.*
*Bride in white now turned to black,*
*Rotten beauty fades so fast,*
*Charnel lover so full of zest,*
*Ever eager for a passionate caress.*
*Lifeless kisses a forbidden treat,*
*Skeletal fingers reach for me,*
*Waiting till I dig her up,*
*Maggot covered cutie*
*It's time for some love.*

It looks as though he submitted it to various children's magazines until he got bored, judging from the pile of horrified, outraged rejection letters tucked into the back of the notebook.

The wooden tables in the middle of the room weighs three hundred pounds each and do 2 Damage if used as weapons. The jars are all Toughness 1 and the bigger ones do up to 2 Damage (so does the jagged edge of a broken jar). You could probably catch some repulsive diseases from some of the things stored inside.

**The Door at the End of the Hall**
This door connects, impossibly, with the far end of the Hall of Doors. You could technically run through the basement in an endless loop, going through the Hall of Doors, then down this hall, across the big main area and into the Hall of Doors again from the other side.




**Roof Section 1**
The roof is steep and the shingles are loose. Every Movement Action you take on this surface must be accompanied by either a Climb Check or a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15. Fail, and you will fall. Falling characters have one last chance to stop themselves before they go off the roof entirely. Ether make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 20 or find yourself clutching air. The edge of the roof is about twelve feet high—probably not lethal, but it could hurt. Call it 2 Damage, and let PCs apply the Feat "Defensive Roll" to blocking it. And of course the usual rules on using Acrobatics to lessen the impact of a fall apply here.

One of the house's smaller chimneys can be found on this roof. It's made of Toughness 5 bricks and is too narrow for anyone bigger than size "Small" to fit down, If you smash it loose and try to use it as a weapon, you will find that it weighs 400 pounds and does 4 Damage. This is of course as much weight as the roof can handle, so anyone who picks it up physically (as opposed to using telekinesis, Gravity Control or some other such power) will immediately fall through the roof into the attic. Since a lot of the floor in this attic is made of plaster, they may well fall on though into the rooms underneath.

**Roof Section 2**
The highest, steepest section of the roof, it runs over the second floor. More fragile than most of the house's walls, it's Toughness 4 and can hold about four hundred pounds of weight. Characters who are heavier than that will fall right through into the attic, and may go plunging on through to the second floor (see The Attic on Page 151)

The pitch of the roof is steep enough and the shingles are old and loose enough that every single Movement Action you make here must be accompanied by a Climb Check vs. DC 15 (unlike on the other roof sections, a simple Reflexes Save won't do it). Some PCs will manage this with ease. Others, of course, aren't even subject to the laws of gravity. Anyone who fails their Climb Check will go tumbling down the roof toward the edge. If they make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 20 they can arrest their fall before they are any damage. Otherwise

they go right over the edge. It's a twenty-five foot drop to the ground—call it Damage 3. If you jump down from this section of the roof to one of the two lower roofs on either side, it takes a Reflexes Check vs. DC 20 to keep from going into a slide toward the nearest edge (another Reflexes Save vs. DC 20 will arrest your fall).

The largest of the house's huge old chimneys can be found near the middle of the roof. Large enough for a Medium sized character to squeeze down, it leads to the Fireplace in the Day Parlor. The Chimney is Toughness 6. What superhumanly strong character would be able to resist snapping it loose and using it as a weapon? Unfortunately it weighs 800 pounds and as soon as they pick it up they will go crashing through the shingles into the house below.

Located on the ridgeline, near the chimney, is the fake satellite dish that Mr. Mandrake uses as his own personal radar station. Up close (fifteen feet or less) the dish looks odd. A Knowledge (Technology) Check vs. DC 15 reveals that this isn't a real satellite TV dish and a Check vs. DC 20 reveals its true function. The dish is surprisingly durable. It's Toughness 5. With a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 you can stop it from working without actually smashing it. With a Check vs. DC 25 you can disable it without alerting anyone monitoring it to the fact that it no longer works.

The sniper's nest is on this roof, surrounded by sandbags. Each sandbag weighs 50 pounds and does 2 Damage if you hit someone with it. For stats on the sniper and his spotter, see Pages 124-125.

**Roof Section #3**

Anyone moving across this steep, poorly repaired roof must make either a Climb Check or a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 (whichever their Player prefers) with every Movement Action or fall. If they fall, a Reflexes Save vs. DC 20 will keep them from going off the edge of the roof and taking 2 Damage.

The roof itself is Toughness 4 and can hold up to 400 pounds before giving way. This particular roof is in exceptionally bad repair. Random sections (wherever the GM decides) are Toughness 0 and can hold only 150 pounds. A Notice Check vs. DC 25 or a Craft (Structural) Check vs. DC 20 will tell you where the bad spots are before you step on them.

One of the house's smaller chimneys stands by the ridgeline. It's Toughness 5. The flue beneath has been choked tightly for years. Not even a tiny PC could get down this chimney (although anyone size "Small" or less *could* hide inside it). If you snap the chimney off and use it as a club, it does 4 Damage. However, it also weighs 400 pounds, so anyone who lifts it will fall though the roof (there are some superpowers like Telekinesis that can skirt this problem).

Down near the leaf-clogged gutters you can find a big rusty old TV antenna. It weighs about forty pounds and does 2 Damage if used as a weapon. It's Toughness 1, although a disable device Check vs. DC 10 will also render it inoperative. If someone disconnects the antenna, then whichever monster is watching television in the TV Room see (Page 141) will become frustrated and start roaming the house, looking for something to smash.

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